



## CHAPTER 11

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# Japanese Female Entrepreneurs: Women in Kyoto Businesses in Tokugawa Japan

*Mary Louise Nagata*

Yamatoya Kane<sup>1</sup> filed a suit with the Kyoto Nakai magistrate in the lunar fourth month of 1834 against Fukui Sakuzaemon, head of the Kyoto measures guild when they failed to pay for work done in her workshop. In

<sup>1</sup>Yamatoya is the name of the workshop that belonged to Kane's father. This and other names ending in -ya represent the house or business organisation the person using the name represented and are not surnames defining an individual or kinship network. Commoners in early modern Japan were generally not allowed to use surnames in public documents without special permission. Fukui, however, was a surname given to the founder of the line by Tokugawa Ieyasu when the carpenter and joiner Sakuzaemon from Fukui village agreed to serve as head of the Kyoto measures guild tasked with standardising the measures of western Japan. All workshops manufacturing measuring cups had to sell them to the guild for certification. For information on Fukui Sakuzaemon and the measures guild, see Kyoto Shi Bunka Kankō Kyoku (ed.), *Fukui ke kyūzō Kyō masu za shiryō chōsa hōkoku sho* [Report of investigation of data for the Kyoto measures guild from an old storehouse of Fukui house] (Kyoto City, 1988), pp. 114–115; and Mary Louise Nagata, 'Mistress or Wife? Fukui Sakuzaemon vs Iwa, 1819–1833', *Continuity and Change* 18, no. 2 (2003): pp. 1–23. For more about naming practices in traditional Kyoto, see Mary Louise Nagata, 'Names and Name Changes in Early Modern Kyoto,

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her deposition she explained that her father Yamatoya Chūbei had originally worked building doors and gates from wood, but Sakuzaemon had invited him to become a measures craftsman carving measures of various sizes to the specifications of the guild. So Chūbei changed occupations and worked as a manufacturer of measures for 21 years until he died of illness in the lunar fourth month of 1833, and his stock in the guild, which represented the licence for the workshop, was inherited by Kane's husband Heibei, Kane herself and her son (and Chūbei's grandson), Matsunosuke. Heibei had been a craftsman in Kane's father's workshop, but Heibei was ill, making his succession to management of the workshop difficult. Kane and Heibei divorced and he returned home to Shimo Kawara village in Etchū province. Kane claimed that she had helped her father manage the workshop for 17 years and had also managed the workshop for Heibei, so there had been no break in the work, and she did not see any problem continuing to manage the workshop for her son Matsunosuke.

When she delivered the measures manufactured by her workshop, the guild checked and accepted them as usual, then questioned who was managing the workshop before they paid. Kane reported the workshop now belonged to her son Matsunosuke and here was the reason for the suit. The guild responded that Matsunosuke was too young and untrained to manage the workshop, and Kane responded she was managing it for him as she had done with her father since she was a child and for her husband after marriage, citing her 17 years of experience. The guild, however, refused to pay for the measures manufactured under the oversight of a woman, claiming that they could not license a workshop controlled by a woman. According to the Tokugawa policy, the warrior government avoided involvement in civil disputes, encouraging the parties to settle out of court. Eventually Kane received her money but was unable to continue the workshop until Matsunosuke reached his majority.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter focuses on female entrepreneurs, or the position of women in the businesses of Tokugawa era Kyoto (1600–1868). Women in Japan have a long business history before the Tokugawa era. The first documented private businesses in Kyoto were owned by women, and women

Japan', in Yangwen Zheng and Charles MacDonald (eds), *Personal Names in Asia: History, Culture and Identity* (Singapore: National University of Singapore 2009): pp. 247–264.

<sup>2</sup> Plaintiff Yamatoya Matsunosuke mother Kane, Toshiyori Shinbei, Goningumi Kashichi [to Obugyō sama], 'Osore nagara on soshō', Civil suit, 23/4/1834, Masu Za Fukui Sakuzaemon Collection No. 248.

were common in food processing, textiles, banking and retail businesses from ancient times.<sup>3</sup> Carpentry-related trades, however, were generally the purview of men. This does not mean that women could not work in carpentry trades, but their ability to do so depended on the acceptance of the craftsmen they worked with. In this case, the guild refused to accept a woman as an independent contractor responsible for overseeing a workshop. During the Tokugawa era, especially as the expansion of literacy meant Confucian ethics became more popularly known and debated, the participation of women became less public.<sup>4</sup>

The story of Kane illustrates several aspects of the research on female entrepreneurs discussed in the sections below. Although there may be many ways to address the role of women in business, an important inter-generational role of women in business in Tokugawa Kyoto was to oversee inheritance and the succession process. For this purpose, a widow took ‘temporary’ control of the business while her son prepared for the role or while the family searched for another appropriate and capable heir. Kane’s story shows that this could also happen after divorce, and cases of widows fulfilling this role are discussed below.

Control of the succession process was not the only role women played in business. Women were employed as skilled artisans, oversaw the young apprentices, co-signed as guarantors on loans and generally filled in where necessary. Kane’s claim of helping her father is an example of this role of overseeing apprentices and filling in as needed. Families also used heiresses to recruit capable managers into a business through marriage, and there are indications that women retained some ownership and say in the businesses of their birth families even after marriage. Kane’s marriage to Heibei is an example of this practice of recruiting a capable son-in-law, although it did not work out as Kane reports that illness prevented him from carrying out the work and ultimately resulted in divorce. From this perspective, women had a pivotal role in connecting and developing business networks. Although there is some indication of businesses that passed down the female line from mother to daughter, a better explanation is that families acted to maintain control of their business assets over generations using both sons and daughters to do so. This is similar to the findings of Susana

<sup>3</sup>Tanahashi Mitsuhide, *Taikei Nihon no rekishi 4: Ōchō no shakai*, [Compendium of Japanese history vol 4: Imperial court society], (Tokyo: Shōgakukan 1988), pp. 129–30. Shigeta Shinichi, *Shomin tachi no Heian kyō* [Commoners of the Heian capital], (Tokyo: Kadokawa Sensho 2008), pp. 48–9, 235–6.

<sup>4</sup>See also Chap. 8 by Nathan Kwan, this volume.

Martínez-Rodríguez and Carmen María Hernández-Nicolás in late nineteenth-century Spain (see Chap. 14 by Hernández-Nicolás and Martínez-Rodríguez in this volume), although different to newer economies of Australasia (see Chap. 7 by Bishop in this volume).

This chapter begins with discussion of women's activities within a business as the wife of the head of household; these women were often business owners but also branch managers. This discussion supplements research on the business practices of the Omi merchants by Eiichirō Ogura in 1988.<sup>5</sup> The chapter then briefly discusses the quantitative data and methodology, before discussing women as heads of household, either as business owners or branch managers, using evidence from the population surveys of 30 neighbourhoods in the city of Kyoto 1786–1869.<sup>6</sup> The discussion in this section adds to existing research on women as property owners by Rieko Makita in 1986 and Ryōichi Yasukuni in 1990 on the lives of common women in early modern Kyoto.<sup>7</sup> It includes a discussion of property ownership and decisions about who was listed as head of household and business and leads to the final section addressing women's roles in the inheritance and succession process.

This chapter argues that women were integral for the success and long-term continuity of a family business. In Japan there was no sense that women were incapable of taking on any task to establish or manage a business in any industry. Instead, they were expected to troubleshoot and fill in with any task or role as needed to maintain a business, but publicly taking the lead was somehow inappropriate. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of what changed after the opening of Japan that has such a low level of female participation in business and upper management positions today.

<sup>5</sup> Ogura Eiichirō, *Omi Shōnin no Keiei* [Management practices of the Omi merchants]; (Kyoto: Sanburaito Shuppan 1988).

<sup>6</sup> For detailed analysis and discussion of female heads of household in Tokugawa era Kyoto, see Mary Louise Nagata, 'Female Headed Households in Early Modern Kyoto, Japan', *Revista de Historiografía*, 26 (2016): pp. 145–155. <https://doi.org/10.20318/revhistro/2016/3102>

<sup>7</sup> Makita Rieko, 'Kinsei Kyoto ni okeru josei no kasan shoyū' [Women's ownership of family assets in early modern Kyoto], in Hayashi Reiko et al. (eds), *Ronshū Kinsei Josei Shi* [Collection of essays on the history of early modern women] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1986): pp. 217–255. Yasukuni Ryoichi, 'Kinsei Kyoto no shomin josei' [Common women in early modern Kyoto], in Kurachi Katsunao and Miyashita Michiko (eds), *Nihon Josei Seikatsu Shi* [Lifestyle history of Japanese women] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press 1990), pp. 77–8.

## SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY: THE ANNUAL POPULATION SURVEYS OF 30 URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Although some sources, like Yamatoya Kane's deposition discussed above, are qualitative sources, this study also uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the annual population surveys compiled by 30 neighbourhoods in Kyoto. From 1635 every community in Japan was required to survey the religious faith of each individual living in the community. Although the purpose of these 'individual faith surveys' (宗門人別改帳) was to ensure that there were no Christians or members of other prohibited sects living in the community,<sup>8</sup> the surveys were rather like mini censuses, compiled annually. Any quantitative analysis in this study uses the surveys of Kyoto neighbourhoods compiled during a 26-year period, from 1843, when the surveys first recorded ages, to 1868. The total population of Kyoto was estimated at about 200,000 people, living in 1600 neighbourhoods, in the 1860s. Each survey listed every resident of the neighbourhood in their households of residence by their relation to the head of household, providing information on age, sex, kinship and birth province as well as whether the household owned its residence or the name and address of the landlord if they rented.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the surveys provide an annual snapshot of each person and every household in 30 neighbourhoods. The number of extant surveys in a neighbourhood series varies greatly by neighbourhood: only 4 neighbourhoods have 20 or more annual surveys each, 6 neighbourhoods have 10–19 surveys each, and the remaining 20 neighbourhoods each have fewer than 10 surveys each. Moreover, there is no single year with data from every neighbourhood, so it is not possible to treat this as a fixed time sample or a time series. Although a single person can be observed many times, each unique due to changes in age, employment, marital status and position in the household, she or he is only observed once per year. The unit of analysis is person-year observations, and the results are probabilities

<sup>8</sup>At the end of each survey is a paragraph stating that every resident was listed and no member of the Christian or other prohibited sects were found. These population surveys, often called population registers in the research literature, are the best source for individual demographic microdata in Japan. Series of surveys from numerous villages, primarily in Northeastern Japan, have been analysed by many Japanese scholars.

<sup>9</sup>Kyoto is the best large city to use because few Edo surveys survive, and ages were not recorded in Osaka until 1867.

that a person would have certain individual and household characteristics, not a percentage of people who had those characteristics.

Katakura Hisako's investigation of women's occupations in Edo (now Tokyo), the political centre of Japan, revealed women working as peddlers, taking in laundry, or otherwise taking on or helping out in the occupations or businesses of their families as the wife, daughter or mother of the business owner, as Kane had done. As will be seen below, it appears that there was little limit to what women could acceptably do in this capacity while the 'real' business owner was incapacitated due to illness or injury, or was simply out of town.<sup>10</sup>

Ogura Eiichirō argued that the wife of a business owner or branch manager had charge of overseeing the younger apprentices as they learned to read, write and calculate while running errands for the household and business.<sup>11</sup> One of the best examples of the participation of the wife in business affairs comes from the Hakutsuru Sake Breweries archives. When one of the top management employees was fired for embezzling in 1809, the relevant document was signed not only by the head, Kanō Jihei, and other directors and managers of the business known at that time as Zaimokuya, but also by Kanō Jihei's wife Yusa.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly a businessman's wife was responsible for providing the day-to-day services of food, clothing and medical care for the business employees living in the household. Maids and younger apprentices employed by the business assisted her in these activities, and these services were certainly critical for the survival of businesses that relied upon their live-in employees, as was common during the Tokugawa period. Our question, however, is whether women were involved in other aspects of the business.

Female names commonly appeared in records of two related areas of economic activity. Women were frequently guarantors for loans, and they

<sup>10</sup> Katakura Hisako, 'Bakumatsu ishin ki no toshi kazoku to joshi rōdō' [Urban families and female labour in the late Tokugawa and Meiji Restoration periods], in Owada Michiko and Nagano Hiroko (eds), *Nihon Josei Shi Ronshū* [Collection of essays on the history of Japanese women] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan 1998): pp. 85–108. See also Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650–1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

<sup>11</sup> Ogura, *Omi Shōnin no Keiei*.

<sup>12</sup> Jihei et al., [In front of the Buddhist altar], 'Mi age sho,' Investigation report, 8/25/1809, *Hakutsuru Komonjo Shiryō Shū* [Hakutsuru collection of historical documents] (Kobe: Hakutsuru Shuzo Kabushiki Gaisha 1978), pp. 364–5; Mary Louise Nagata, *Labor Contracts and Labor Relations in Early Modern Central Japan* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon 2005), pp. 113–4.

were property owners and landlords. Women also borrowed and loaned money in their own right as well as co-signing for the men in their families. Moreover, when a man borrowed money, his loan was frequently guaranteed by his wife, his mother or, less often, his sister.<sup>13</sup>

### WOMEN AS HOUSEHOLD HEADS: BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS

The Tokugawa regime has such a strong patriarchal reputation that women's business ownership would seem to have been nearly impossible. Even a cursory scan of population surveys from the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) reveals very few women listed as heads of households, so most research has assumed that women's business ownership was rare and limited to textiles or service occupations. Yamatoya Kane, for example, tried to list the business in her six-year-old son's name because she knew the guild was unlikely to accept the business in her name. Although the reasons for listing a child as head of household were more complex, there was a 5.7 per cent probability that a head of household was aged 1–15. Scholars have concluded that the few female heads of households, especially of businesses, were widows of former owners and merely filling in until sons could inherit.<sup>14</sup> While this follows the pattern found by scholars elsewhere, particularly in Europe,<sup>15</sup> and was the case for the majority found in the Kyoto surveys, I argue that the situation was more complex.

Public authorities tended to discourage listing women as heads of household and businesses. Yasukuni suggested two reasons for this. One was the assumption by political authorities that businesses commonly owned and operated by women—bathhouses, teahouses, hostels, hair-dressers—were often places of gambling and illegal private prostitution. So the original policy of discouraging listing women as heads of households in the mid-eighteenth century was aimed at controlling these businesses and discouraging illegal gambling and prostitution.<sup>16</sup>

Yasukuni's second reason was the requirement that household heads fulfil public community responsibilities. Each neighbourhood community

<sup>13</sup> Makita, 'Kinsei Kyoto ni okeru josei no kasan shoyū', pp. 217–255.

<sup>14</sup> Yasukuni, 'Kinsei Kyoto no shomin josei', pp. 77–8.

<sup>15</sup> Beatrice Moring, *Widows in European Economy and Society, 1600–1920* (Boydell Press 2017).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76–7.

had its own administration, collected its own taxes and provided police, firefighting and administrative services. The city administration was comprised of an interlocking network of these self-governing units. In the early part of the Tokugawa period, these public responsibilities—administration, policing and firefighting—were performed directly by heads of household with the responsibility for organising these functions rotated among them. Women, he argued, were not considered fully capable of carrying out the police and firefighting responsibilities required, therefore households headed by women or children were considered only partial members of the community and had fewer rights. From the mid-eighteenth century, however, more neighbourhoods began hiring someone to handle day-to-day policing and peacekeeping and to organise firefighting. Business households also had management employees, who could act on the behalf of their employers when necessary, so the public responsibilities of the head could be settled monetarily or through agents, and female headship became less of a problem for the immediate community.<sup>17</sup> The population surveys of Sujikaibashi neighbourhood included a note for every woman listed as head of household that ‘no men could be found to list’, but this was a fiction since some of those households contained adult men, as discussed below.

Investigation of the population surveys of 30 neighbourhoods in Kyoto compiled variously between 1843 and 1869 reveals most neighbourhoods listed some women as heads of households at some time and only two neighbourhoods have no record of female heads of household listed in the available surveys. The first, Sannō, only had one survey and was also unusual for a neighbourhood near the commercial centre of the city in that only 3 of its 17 households listed live-in employees. This lack of employees together with the fact that all but two of the households were renting their residences suggests that Sannō was less affluent than many of the other neighbourhoods near the commercial centre. The second, Matsu’ue, in a series of three surveys over five years (1850 and 1852–1855), listed only 24 households and only three servants, each observed only once and employed by three different households. Incidentally, none of the landlords in Sannō were women either, but one woman appeared as a landlord in Matsu’ue—one of six landlords but with a probability of 21 per cent that she was the owner of a rental property meaning she appeared as landlord slightly more often than the average for a landlord in that neighbourhood.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78–86.



Bringing the survey listings of all 30 neighbourhoods together provides 37,013 observations for analysis from 225 flat file single year listings, 1842–1869. The probability that a head of household was female was nine per cent, as noted above. The highest probability (25 per cent) was in Ishigaki, a small neighbourhood of only 18 households employing few servants on the east side of town near Kenninji temple and with only two extant surveys. Investigating whether female-headed households were more likely in particular locations, among owners or renters or among households employing more or fewer servants revealed no particular trend that differed from the overall trend for all households. Female headship appeared for a variety of complex reasons, often connected to ownership and inheritance, but also to solitary households and to business convenience.

Approximately half (49 per cent) of the observations of female-headed households were for women living alone. Although some women may have moved out of whatever household they were living in to live alone, this process is difficult to observe in the data. Instead, many of these women became head of household upon the death of a spouse, like Katsu, who lived alone for six years after her husband Sōhachi died before she moved away. Gaps in the data can also leave much unexplained. Tsuboya Mohei was living with his daughter Yoso in 1844 when he remarried. The three of them, Mohei and his new wife with his daughter, formed a family in 1845, but the record is missing for 1846–1847. In 1848, Yoso was 20 and living alone, and seven years later she was a single parent with a nine-year-old son. There is no information to determine whether she married and was widowed or divorced, had an extra-marital child, or had adopted a son. Female heads of households in Kyoto tended to be older women with a 51 per cent probability of being over 50. Many were probably widows, although younger women may have never been married. There was also a 36.6 per cent probability that a female-headed household was a woman living with her children. Even so, there are a number of characteristics that make female-headed households in Kyoto stand out.<sup>18</sup>

The probability that female heads of household were native to the city was 91.5 per cent. Although immigrant women were most commonly found in the city centre (59 per cent probability), when they appeared as heads of households (only 64 observations) they were most commonly found in the periphery (32 observations), followed by the city centre (21

<sup>18</sup> Nagata, 'Female Headed Households', pp. 190–4.

observations), and least often in the Nishijin silk textile district (11 observations). Female-headed households were more likely, at 34 per cent probability, than male-headed households, at 28 per cent probability, to own their residences. This could be because owner households were more stable and likely to remain in a neighbourhood for long periods of time, possibly meaning more opportunity to observe the periods that a widow or daughter took over headship and management for a while. For example, Yasaburō was head of Yoshinoya in Koromotana Minami neighbourhood until he died in 1848. Then his daughter Uta was head of household while aged 13–19 before she married and her new husband took the name Yasaburō and the position as head of household. Households with female or male heads were approximately equally likely to own their residences in Nishijin silk textile district and in the peripheral neighbourhoods. In the city commercial centre, however, households with a female head were far more likely at 41 per cent probability to own their residences than those with male heads at 28 per cent probability. Households with male heads were most likely to be owners in Nishijin, where the probability was equal to female-headed households at 31 per cent.

Households where a woman was listed as head of household even though she had a co-resident spouse were rare, but not non-existent, appearing in the surveys of three neighbourhoods. There were two such households in Nishijin (Sujikaibashi), two in the city centre (Sōrin), and one in the periphery (Nishinokyō Kaminochō). Since there are only five such women and their listing as household heads contrasts so drastically with official public policy, let us examine them individually.

Kiya Tome appears in 1843 as a widow with two daughters. Two years later, in 1845, she had remarried Ihachi, but she was still listed as the head of household, with Ihachi identified as her spouse (*otto*). In other words, the property belonged to her, and he married in.<sup>19</sup> Omiya Tetsu is listed as head of household living with her mother Etsu in Sujikaibashi neighbourhood in 1856–1857. In 1860, Etsu is gone after a three-year gap in the data, but Tetsu is still head of household even though she has married Shōgorō, and they have a newborn daughter Shiga. Moreover, Tetsu remains head through the 1862 survey, the final survey in this series.<sup>20</sup> At

<sup>19</sup> *Kyōto Ōmiya dōri Teranouchi Sujikaibashi chō 'Shūmon Ninbetsu Aratame Chō'* [Individual faith surveys], 1843–1845, 1848–1851, 1856–1857, 1860, 1862.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

minimum, this shows that women did not lose their property rights in marriage.

Two women lived in Sōrin Neighbourhood near the commercial centre of town. Haiya Ei appears in the two surveys for Sōrin in 1868–1869 as head of household living with her spouse Oribe, her son Toyosaburō, two teenage daughters Masu and Sei and one maid. Iseyā Kane, age 76, also appears in the two Sōrin surveys as head of Iseyā living with her spouse Chōuemon, age 70, daughter Koto, age 52, son Takejirō, age 28, and grandson Shintarō, age 7. The surveys do not identify Shintarō's parent/s or whether Koto and Takejirō were also husband and wife, but this was common in the Kyoto surveys when the husband was an in-marrying son-in-law. In other words, when the groom married into the bride's family in an uxorilocal marriage the groom was often identified as a son of his new in-laws, making him look like a brother to his new wife. This family also employed one servant in 1869.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, Yawataya Masa is listed as head of household in the 1867 survey for Nishinokyō Kaminochō even though she lived with her spouse Kichijirō. The couple also appears with Masa as head in the survey of 1868, the final year for this series.

This closer examination of five female-headed households reveals some interesting details. Since all of these women were married, the neighbourhood officials compiling the registers could have listed their husbands as heads of these households. In the cases of Haiya Ei and Iseyā Kane, the officials could have even listed their sons as heads of their households, even though they were children. There are, in fact, 275 observations of children under the age of 11 (515 under 16) listed as heads of household even though most were living with at least one parent. If all of these children were boys we could claim that the child was listed so as to avoid listing the mother, but some of these children listed as head of household were girls, and, as we have seen in the five examples above, women could be listed as heads of household even when married with a co-resident spouse. The public policy of avoiding listing females as head of household does not explain the situation and listing a child as head instead of the adult mother makes no sense if the reason were the duties of policing and firefighting. The listing of children as heads of household was integral to ownership,

<sup>21</sup> *Kyōto Abura no koji Ane no koji sagaru Sōrin chō 'Shūmon Ninbetsu Aratame Chō'* [Individual faith surveys], 1868–1869.

inheritance and strategies of intergenerational business survival, discussed further in a later section.

Now let us consider an example of a woman as a business manager. The Endō family have owned Hiranoya, a silk textile wholesale business in Kyoto since the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The family business archives reveal that three out of more than 50 extant labour contracts were addressed to a woman called Hiranoya Nobu as the employer. The contracts addressed to Hiranoya Nobu are dated 1855–1856. Earlier contracts were addressed to Hiranoya Yasaburō until 1854, and contracts from 1857 until 1893 were addressed to Hiranoya Yasaku (both male). So Hiranoya Nobu appears to have been Hiranoya Yasaburō's widow who took over management of the business until the next head, likely her son, Yasaku, could take over. However, examining the draft population lists kept by Hiranoya for their Kyoto household/shops reveals a more complicated story.<sup>23</sup>

Hiranoya had at least two shops or branches. The survey drafts compiled in 1840–1843 list Hiranoya Jinsaburō as head living with his wife Taki and eight employees in 1840 with another three added in 1841, and three more in 1842. In 1843 government reforms required that the birth province and age of each individual be recorded in the official surveys, so Jinsaburō appears to have decided to list the six employees that came to Kyoto from another province. Since these lists were simply notes Hiranoya compiled to prepare their report to the neighbourhood official compiling the neighbourhood surveys, they did not bother to relist Jinsaburō, his wife or any family members that may have been living in the household. The employees in these listings were three skilled or management employees of *tedai* status, one maid and two younger male employees.

The record then skips to 1853 and lists Hiranoya Yakichi, age 18, as head of household living with one other family member, whose name and other information is missing from the record, plus 15 employees. The employees include three maids, six *tedai* skilled management employees, and six male apprentices or regular employees. The next year, however, Yakichi is gone and Hiranoya Nobu, age 38, is listed as head. There is no information or explanation as to what happened to Yakichi or what Yakichi's relation was to the former Jinsaburō or to Nobu, much less to Yasaburō. This branch of the business now employed eight *tedai*, five

<sup>22</sup>Notice that Endō is the family surname and Hiranoya is the house/business name.

<sup>23</sup>Endō Yasaburō family collection, Kyoto Library for Historical Documents, Kyoto: ten boxes.

apprentices and two maids. This was clearly the same branch that Yakichi was in charge of since most of the employees were the same. Nobu continued as head of this branch until 1858 when Hiranoya Yasaku, now aged 20, took over. This series of lists continues with Yasaku as head until 1861 and another volume continues the record of this branch with Yasaku as head until 1866.<sup>24</sup>

This is not, however, the end of the record. The lists for a second branch with Yakichi as head begin in 1857 and continue through 1867. Yasaku's branch generally employed 12–14 people, including 5–6 skilled or management *tedai* and a couple of maids. Yakichi's branch also employed a similar number and in 1859 Yakichi (age 24) changed his name to Yasaburō as head of the home or main branch. In 1867 Yasaku and his household moved in with the new Yasaburō and Yasaku is identified as Yasaburō's younger brother. Nobu does not appear in either household after 1857.<sup>25</sup>

Certain details suggest Nobu's role in this business. The Endō family business was known as Hiranoya Yasaburō. Yakichi was the elder son and his branch was the main house of the business network. This means that the branch Nobu took over from Yakichi was a cadet branch (known as a *bunke*) and Yakichi was likely getting some experience there before beginning the succession process to take over headship of the main house. Moreover, since Yasaburō appears in the business documents until 1854, Yakichi likely moved to the main house when Yasaburō fell ill, or was ready to retire. Yasaku was not yet considered capable of taking over management of the cadet branch, so Nobu stepped in, whether as Yasaburō's widow and the mother of Yakichi and Yasaku or as Yasaburō's sister. In either case, Nobu was capable of taking over management until Yasaku could take over and that suggests that she already had been involved in the business behind the scenes in some capacity or other. Nevertheless, this case also highlights the topic of the next section.

<sup>24</sup> 'Shūmon okite', Draft individual faith surveys, 1841–1860, Endō Yasaburō collection No. 624 and 'Ninbetsu shūmon aratame chō', Religious and population registers, 1861–1866, Endō Yasaburō collection No. 625, Kyoto Library for Historical Documents.

<sup>25</sup> Endō, 'Shūmon ninbetsu aratame chō kari okite', Draft individual faith surveys, 1858–1867, Endō Yasaburō collection No. 470, Kyoto Library for Historical Documents.

## WOMEN, INHERITANCE AND HEADSHIP SUCCESSION

As with Hiranoya Nobu above, women often filled in when the male head was unavailable. Katakura's research reveals wives, daughters and sisters filling in when the male head was incapacitated due to illness or injury, as did Yamatoya Kane, with whom this chapter began.<sup>26</sup> When the male head of household and business died before the headship succession process could be successfully completed to the satisfaction of the family, the widow, daughter or even sister took steps to oversee and complete the process. This could mean taking over management until the heir, whether eldest son or some other person, was trained and ready, and this was what Kane tried to do. Even further, this could mean overseeing the activities of the new head and acting to replace him with another candidate who could do the job better and was still acceptable to the rest of the family.

In Kyoto, wills had to be filed with the neighbourhood officials and then gain the agreement of the larger family and kin group before they would be accepted. They were filed by the new head of household upon gaining his or her position and partly had the purpose of informing the neighbourhood community who would be responsible for the property if something should happen to the head.<sup>27</sup> Even so, the kin group could contest the will, and many wills identified two or more heirs to receive and take responsibility for the property.<sup>28</sup> In a situation where there were multiple heirs, or if there was no will, women, primarily the widow of the former head, oversaw the transition process. Frequently property was transferred first to the widow or other female family member—daughter or sister—who then carried out the process of determining the most appropriate heir (usually the eldest son), overseeing his training and finding an alternative in case he did not work out.

These family disputes could be complex, and women could be both protagonists and mediators, exemplified in the case of the Fukui family, which ran the measures guild. When the head Sōuemon died, his adoptive heir, his nephew-in-law, Sakuzaemon, was already in position as head, having succeeded while Sōuemon was still alive. Sōuemon's mistress (and

<sup>26</sup> Katakura, 'Bakumatsu ishin ki no toshi kazoku to joshi rōdō', 85–108.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Louise Nagata, 'Property ownership and the neighbourhood community in early modern Kyoto', forthcoming in EHESS/CRH publications, 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Yasuoka Shigeaki, 'Kinsei Kyoto shōnin no kagyō to sōzoku' [Family business and inheritance of early modern Kyoto merchants], *Kyoto shakai shi kenkyū* [Research on the social history of Kyoto] (Kyoto: Hōritsu Bunkasha, 1971).

mother of his three daughters), however, tried to interfere, claiming to be Sōuemon's widow. At this point, another woman, Sōuemon's sister and the heir's mother-in-law, stepped in as the family representative in the dispute.<sup>29</sup> Other successions were more amicable and flexible, with women often playing significant roles. When Hoteiya Gohei died in 1819 his widow Naka took over their business selling salted fish and oil in Seidō neighbourhood for a year before passing it to her son. Her son Rihei, who also took the headship name Gohei, served as head for two years and then stepped down and left, returning headship to his mother Naka. Ten years later Hoteiya Naka adopted one of the management employees who then married one of Gohei's nieces and succeeded as head taking the headship name Gohei in 1834.<sup>30</sup>

One of the difficulties in understanding wills is that the heirs named in the will often never appear in the surveys for the neighbourhood where the property was located after the testator's death. Cross-referencing the wills of Koromodana Minami neighbourhood written between 1843 and 1868, the period that the population surveys record age, however, reveals that the main purpose of the Kyoto wills was to identify who would be responsible for the property if the current resident owner suddenly died or disappeared. Many wills identified multiple heirs, often including at least one female in the group. The series of wills for Bundaiya in the Koromodana Minami neighbourhood reveals the process of headship change and property transmission and illustrates that determining who to list as heads of households could be related to who was named as heir in a will.

The Bundaiya household appears in the population surveys of the Koromodana Minami neighbourhood, 1843–1853. The head of household was Bundaiya Tahei (age 33) in 1843, his mother Kau (age 66) in 1846, her grandson Minnosuke (age 6) in 1848, his aunt Tome (age 40) in 1849 and Minnosuke (age 10) again in 1852.<sup>31</sup> Kau wrote her will in

<sup>29</sup>I have written about this case elsewhere. See Mary Louise Nagata, 'Mistress or Wife? Fukui Sakuzaemon vs. Iwa, 1819–1833', *Continuity and Change* 18, no. 2 (2003): pp. 1–23.

<sup>30</sup>I discuss this case in more detail elsewhere. See Mary Louise Nagata, 'Headship and Succession in Early Modern Kyoto: the role of women', *Continuity and Change* 19, no. 1 (2004): pp. 1–32.

<sup>31</sup>*Kyōto Koromodana tōri Sanjō sagaru Koromodana Minami chō 'Shūmon Ninbetsu Aratame Chō'* [Individual faith surveys], 1786–1837, 1843, 1845–1867. Sanjō Koromodana Chō collection, Kyoto Prefectural Library for Historical Documents.

1846 ceding her ownership to her grandson Minnosuke upon her death.<sup>32</sup> Minnosuke wrote a will in 1848 ceding ownership to his Uncle Kohei and Aunt Tome, again ‘upon his death’.<sup>33</sup> Tome wrote her will in 1849 ceding her rights to her nephew Minnosuke, her son Kajinosuke and daughter Take.<sup>34</sup> In 1852 Minnosuke wrote his second will now ceding his rights to his cousins Kajinosuke and Take.<sup>35</sup> The 1853 survey lists Minnosuke (age 11) as head living with his cousins Kajinosuke (age 17) and Take age (25), who are also identified as his guardians. At the same time that the survey records Tome joining the Bundaiya household with her two children in 1847 and remaining in the listing through 1851, her husband Kohei appears only in 1848 listed separately as a lodger and is absent afterwards even though he too had been listed as an heir with his wife Tome.

There are several points to highlight here. Minnosuke (age 6) was listed head of household in 1848 even though his Aunt Tome was living with him, as was his cousin Take (age 22). I argue that this was because Kau had willed the property to Minnosuke, not Tome or Take. Tome could take headship in 1849 because Minnosuke wrote a will naming her as his heir. So, one reason children were listed as head of household, despite the presence of capable adults in the household, was because the main property rights belonged to the child, not the adults. The same was likely true when a woman was listed head of household despite the presence of adult men in the household, like the currently married women discussed in the previous section above. For a different example, Omiya Tsuta (age 35) was listed as head of household despite living with her father Tōbei (age 59) in 1862. The next observation for this household is 1866 with Tsuta living alone.

Children are listed as heads of households at ages 1–15 for 515 household observations in the population surveys of 30 neighbourhood series.

<sup>32</sup> Bundaiya Kau (to Koromodana Minami alderman Sōbei and the neighbourhood representatives), ‘Yuzurijo no koto’, Transmission will, 1846.12.8, Sanjō Koromodana Chō collection No. 8517, Kyoto Prefectural Library for Historical Documents.

<sup>33</sup> Bundaiya Minnosuke (to Koromodana Minami alderman Yasubei and the neighbourhood representatives), ‘Yuzurijo no koto’, Transmission will, 1848.2.14, Sanjō Koromodana Chō collection No. 8521, Kyoto Prefectural Library for Historical Documents.

<sup>34</sup> Bundaiya Tome (to Koromodana Minami alderman Kihei and the neighbourhood representatives), ‘Yuzurijo no koto’, Transmission will, 1849.4.24, Sanjō Koromodana Chō collection No. 8522, Kyoto Prefectural Library for Historical Documents.

<sup>35</sup> Bundaiya Minnosuke (to Koromodana Minami alderman Jusuke and the neighbourhood representatives), ‘Yuzurijo no koto’, Transmission will, 1852.5.14, Sanjō Koromodana Chō collection No. 8525, Kyoto Prefectural Library for Historical Documents.



They had a 79 per cent probability of living with at least one parent, and 18.6 per cent probability of living with both parents. The majority of these children were boys, so one explanation could be that the surveys listed the child as head following the policy of avoiding listing female heads of household. However, this does not explain those living with both parents or the 4 per cent probability of living with their single fathers. We have also seen in the previous section that women were sometimes listed as head of household when there were appropriate male choices to list. Moreover, there was a 4.5 per cent probability that these young heads of household were girls, often while living with at least one parent. Minoya Ritsu, for example, became head of household when her father Wasuke died at the age of 33. Ritsu was head of household between the ages of three and ten, when the record for this household ended, despite living with her mother Uno and her grandmother Naka. The examples of Hishiya Yasujirō and his cousin Mine show a boy and a girl in the same family who each became heads of two branches of a business before their tenth year.

Mine (age 2) appears in 1854, the first year of the Yoshimizu survey series, in the household of her cousin Hishiya Yasujirō (age 7). The household was a business with nine live-in employees in addition to the extended family of Yasujirō, his mother Fuji, siblings and his cousins Mine and her elder sister Yoshi (age 17). Yoshi left the household soon after, likely to enter service. The only adult family member in the household to oversee the business and employees was Yasujirō's mother Fuji (age 38). At the age of seven Yasujirō was unlikely to have been managing the business himself. Moreover, although the number of employees remained at the same level through 1861, the final year of the series, none of the senior employees remained in the household more than two years. So we can presume that Fuji was managing the business instead of relying on a senior employee to mentor her son, who nevertheless was the proprietor.

Meanwhile, Mine's father Kauemon joined the household, now a joint household comprised of two single parents and their children. Mine's younger half-sister Teru was born a year later in 1857, and in 1859 Kauemon and his children moved out, forming a second household with Fuji as Kauemon's wife. This left Yasujirō and his siblings living on their own at ages 11, 12 (Yasujirō) and 17, to run the Hishiya business with nine employees. Kauemon, Fuji and their two daughters had no live-in employees, but Kauemon died in late 1859 and Mine (age 8) inherited the

property, succeeding to headship of her branch of Hishiya, despite living with her single mother Fuji as well as her younger sister Teru.<sup>36</sup>

Both Bundaiya and the Hishiya properties were owned by their residents, so wills and property ownership can explain why children came to be listed as heads of these households. Households listing children as head, however, had an 85 per cent probability of renting their residences, so why would they be listed as heads? Based on Yamatoya Kane's experience, the business licence and demands of guild, trade association or other licensing body likely played a role.

There is a second case from the measures guild documents that reveals the possibilities. Kijiya Teijirō worked for the measures guild using a lathe to carve and manufacture measures to guild specifications for many years. When he died he left his wife Uno and their young son now also called Teijirō, who was still a minor and unable to carry on the business personally. This was similar to the situation of Yamatoya Kane, whose story opened this chapter, but had a different outcome. Uno and her son moved in with Obiya Fusajirō, an artisan who had worked for Yamatoya Kane. The business licence was deposited temporarily with another guild member, Kawakamiya Rihei, who hired another artisan who was not yet established to carry out the work until Teijirō completed his training and grew up. This information comes from a letter written in 1837 by Teijirō, now an adult, who decided he did not want to work as a measures craftsman, so he retrieved the licence from Kawakamiya Rihei and sold it back to the guild for 200 *ryō* (one *ryō* had the approximate value of modern US\$1000).<sup>37</sup> Clearly the measures guild would not accept children or women as licence owners and business managers, even on a temporary basis, as noted at the beginning. At the same time, a child was not obligated to continue his family's business. In that case, the family could either find another heir or sell the licence.

The refusal to accept women or minor children as successors was not universal. Records indicating the occupation or business of households with women or children listed as head show that they participated in textile industries or in food processing. Some of these households may have

<sup>36</sup> *Kyōto Akezu tōri Matsubara sagaru Yoshimizu chō 'Shūmon Ninbetsu Aratame Chō'* [Individual faith surveys], 1854, 1856–1861.

<sup>37</sup> Kijiya Teijiro, mother Uno, witness Obiya Fusajiro, witness Itamiya Jūbei [to Fukui Sakuzaemon], 'Issatsu no koto,' Letter and agreement, 12/1837, Masu Za Fukui Sakuzaemon Collection No. 417, Kyoto City Library for Historical Documents, Kyoto.

been simply one branch of a much larger business organisation, as with the case of Hiranoya Nobu, who was manager of a cadet branch of the Hiranoya business until her son Yasaku achieved his majority. In such cases, the business licence may have remained under the name of one of the related branches or the main house.

There is still much that is unclear in the process. Even so, clearly women served as managers in family businesses or otherwise filled in when father, husband, son or brother was ill or otherwise incapacitated. Moreover, as demonstrated by Kane, they expected both to be able to do so and that society would accept them in this capacity. Kane's case also demonstrates that filling in was one thing but official recognition and licensing was another. Finally, Kane and other cases like hers also served to bring about changes in policy that allowed women to find ways to work around official policies at least to ensure the continued income and survival of the family and business as demonstrated by Uno.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter challenges the impression that women had no role whatsoever in business management in the Tokugawa period, or that their role was limited to overseeing the apprentices and otherwise providing for the daily needs of the live-in employees. By considering the role of women in the intergenerational transfers of business and using multiple sources, we find a more complex picture of the important and integral roles women played, especially for the survival and continuation of the business through the inheritance and succession process.

Occupation surveys and other data for Kyoto reveal that women owned or managed businesses in the textile industry as seamstresses and related work. They also owned or managed businesses in the food processing industry; for example, Hoteiya Naka ran a salted fish and oil business, and others appear as restaurant owners. Similar research for Edo adds hairdressers, peddling and service trades to this list. Women, however, no matter what the industry, were not employed as managers, although they took over business management as family representatives. When they managed a business, they were taking over duties temporarily in the absence of male members of their own families, either natal or marital.

On the other hand, women were clearly engaged in property ownership and investment, earning money by leasing property to others. Moreover, assets under female control played an important role in loans and other

financial activities. In this respect, although women may not have had management roles or high-status occupations, they could be important business partners. Importantly, women's marriage did not change their ownership of property or business. A spouse might take over management and operation of a business, especially if required by the trade association of that industry, but ownership often remained in the name of the woman or her children. Business documents also occasionally show the wife of the head co-signing with her spouse. The population surveys list a few women as heads of households even when they had co-resident spouses and adult sons.

The examples of Hoteiya Naka and the Fukui family also reveal that women not only stepped in to fill the gap until the heir was ready but could actually control the succession process, disinheriting or divorcing one heir and looking for another. The example of Yamatoya Kane also points to this process when she divorced her spouse Heibei. The business licence inherited from her father effectively belonged to her and her son. More importantly, the examples of Kane and Uno also show that such decisions had to take the requirements and policies of the trade association or guild for that industry into account. At the same time, women also could sue in the courts of the city magistrates. Kane did not believe that her sex would disqualify her from owning and operating the business and expected that the magistrate would support her claim.

The most important role of women in business seems to have been to ensure the survival of the business for future generations and protect the family assets, including business assets, for the next generation. The cases of Uno and Teijirō and of Hoteiya Naka show that the children in the next generation were not forced to continue the business. They could choose to sell or to leave the business in other hands and continue to gain income or benefit from it. Indeed, this is exactly what made the role of women in overseeing the inheritance process so important.

The future success of a business could depend upon having a capable manager in charge. A business could support many more than the people living in the immediate household. This made headship succession an important process and a vulnerable time for a business and for the owner family kin group. Ideally the former head would choose and train his heir, then retire to oversee the first years of management under the new head. All too often, however, the former head became ill or died before he could complete this process. Then his widow or another female relation took up the task of filling in during the illness and overseeing the succession process

upon the death of the former head who was her husband, father, or even brother or son. This made the succession process a matter of survival and affluence of the group, and the role of women in controlling or overseeing the process one of great importance.

From the 1870s the new Meiji government took action to adjust Japanese property laws and inheritance to fit Western ideas of ‘civilised’ society, using Prussia as their model for family law. Particularly after the Meiji Civil Code of 1898, women and various categories of male kin were shut out of the possibility of inheritance or participating in property, and therefore family business ownership. Women continued to substitute for male family members to keep the family business going but less in official capacities. After World War II, laws aimed at breaking up the large family concerns called *zaibatsu* limited family management and participation in the large industrial businesses. This limited the traditional ways women had become managers in larger businesses. Nevertheless, women have remained active as owners and managers in medium to small businesses in Japan in ways similar to the past.

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