

## Growing Up Manly

### *Male Samurai Childhood in Late Edo-Era Tosa*

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*“Previously young samurai of the household still wore the round forelock hairstyles of children until around age fourteen or fifteen, and none of them walked around wearing two swords. Instead, they wore just one short sword when they left the house. It was proper for all of them to start wearing two swords when they trimmed corners into their forelocks and sewed up the open underarms of their kimonos in a ‘half-adulthood’ ceremony showing they would soon take on the appearance and duties of an adult. But in recent years, little boys aged five or six with their hair still up in toddler-like buns cannot go out of the house for even a minute without wearing two swords. Their parents and elder brothers say that of course it is a sign of being born into a warrior house, that they are born into precocious excellence and should wear two swords like adults.”*

—TOSA SAMURAI MINOURA YUKINAO, WRITING IN 1803  
AT AGE SEVENTY-EIGHT

The warrior-bureaucrats known as samurai constituted the ruling class in the Edo period (1600–1868) and filled the highest levels of both government and military. The head of each samurai household was a male who held a particular rank and received a specified fief or stipend in his lord’s household. This position conferred on him a house and its property, a guaranteed annual income, and high social and legal status that set him above the villagers, townspeople, and other commoners who made up over 95 percent of the population. This position was inherited, and if a samurai lost it as punishment for a crime, he became a *rōnin*: a lordless samurai without income, without a house, and of low social standing. Not having a son ready to inherit might see the end of the family’s position as well. Such loss was a disaster for the whole household of family members, dependents, and servants, and also threatened a decline in influence and prestige for people in the kin network. Naturally families put a disproportionate amount of resources into maintaining the male head and raising his heir, and children were raised to learn their several roles in ensuring the household’s continuance (Ōta 2011: 55, 72–120).

Family strategies shaped the experience of childhood for both samurai boys and girls. Daughters were raised to marry a samurai household head and serve as wife and mother. They were trained to take on a large degree of household management and contribute to economically productive activities such as weaving. Women were not allowed to be official household heads, but if there were no sons in the household, then one of the daughters would be expected to remain in the house and marry a man who was willing to be adopted into the household and take on the family name and position. Such adoption was a frequent and relatively easy matter in samurai households because household continuance was much more important than paternal bloodline, but sons sired by the male head of the house were generally desired as the ideal way to maintain the family lineage. One elderly retainer in Tosa domain, Kusunose Ōe, wrote in his diary upon the birth of a son in 1831: “Up to now I have had six daughters. Now that the seventh child is a son I can somewhat justify myself to my ancestors. There is no happiness greater than this!” (Ōta 2011: 85–86) Samurai sons were raised to be heir and then master of a household, either in their own home, by being adopted into an heirless household, or—more rarely—by having the domain lord hire them directly as retainers and thereby to set up a new household. The family goal was to make sons capable family heads, good retainers of their lords, and men respected by their peers and others.

How did families relate to their children and raise them, and what specifically did they regard as good, capable, and respectable? Analyzing such family goals is well suited to highlighting the socially constructed nature of samurai childhood because the goals of samurai childrearing were focused on maintaining the family’s institutionally well-defined hereditary status and economic class.

However, one of the inherent limitations in a family strategies approach to childhood is that it produces narratives of children as the objects of adult action and desires and reduces their subjectivity (Cunningham 1998: 1196). One way to compensate for this and to more fully grasp a child’s experience and active place in the family is to explore the emotions involved in the familial relationship. The rules of emotional communication are, like family strategies, constructed historically, but they have a strong biological basis that puts children and adults on more equal footing as individuals (Rosenwein 2002: 837). Emotions were used communicatively in the deployment of family strategy. Records of emotional expression or of states of attachment and alienation can help us better understand how people experienced its effects and inherent tensions, and in particular how children related to their parents and peers as they grew (“AHR Conversation” 2012: 1496–1500). What were the rules regarding emotional expression and function (what Solomon calls the emotional repertoire; see chapter 5), and did these rules change along the way to adulthood?

This chapter addresses these questions through a close look at childrearing and commentary on samurai-class boys in the Yamauchi clan, who ruled Tosa domain

in southwestern Japan. Numerous memoirs and diaries by various Tosa domain samurai who lived from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, roughly the final century of the Edo period, survive and they contain many records of children and their upbringing. The memoirs relate their authors' own childhood experiences as well as the childhood experiences of others, and are especially rich in the expression of emotional narratives. Being written by adults they have the advantage of containing an interpretive and reflective understanding of the past, but the disadvantage of reflecting highly selective and edited views of the experience of childhood. The diaries contain parents' records of childrearing and children's behavior and occasionally reveal emotional expressions. Three of the documents come from three generations of the Mori family, who were an upper-rank, if not elite, samurai household in Tosa domain. The first ("Nikki") is the mid-eighteenth-century diary by Mori Hirosada (1710–1773), who raised two sons and two daughters. His income was enough to maintain a household of ten to fifteen people including the servants. The next ("Nichiroku") is the diary of his son Mori Yoshiki (1768–1807), who raised four sons and two daughters. One of Yoshiki's sons, Mori Masana (1805–1873), compiled a type of biography of Yoshiki that consisted of excerpts from his father's letters and diary and, more importantly, many stories told about Yoshiki by Yoshiki's wife, relatives, friends, and chief retainer ("Sendai gyōjo"). Additionally, a samurai contemporary of Hirosada and Yoshiki, Minoura Yukinao (1726–1813), began writing a set of memoirs in 1803 when he was seventy-eight years old, reflecting on how customs in Tosa had changed since he was a child. It contains many observations on samurai childrearing practices and childhood experience (Minoura 2010).<sup>1</sup> Finally, the early pages of the memoir-diary by Sasaki Takayuki (1830–1910), a man who started life as a samurai of low status and income, contain a rich record of experience and emotive language regarding childhood in the mid-nineteenth century (Sasaki 1970).

#### MARKING STAGES OF CHILDHOOD GROWTH AND ENTRY INTO ADULTHOOD

Edo-era childhood was differentiated into various stages, each of which had its expectations and goals for advancement. Movement into each succeeding stage was socially marked by ceremonies involving family and friends and entailed changes in dress and hairstyle that indicated clearly even to strangers what stage the child had achieved. Reception into the social world as a baby happened about a week after birth with a naming ceremony. Having had their heads shaved as babies, sons and daughters became toddlers around age three with a *kamioki* ceremony allowing their hair to grow out. They might begin education outside the home around age six or seven. A son would receive a new set of pleated pants (*hakama*) and became a youth around age ten to twelve when he gained a hairstyle and clothing transitioning towards that of an adult. The *sodedome* ceremony

marked the change from childhood to adulthood for a female samurai, when the long sleeves of her kimono were shortened, usually soon after her first marriage. For a male samurai the public ceremony that marked him as an adult (*genpuku*) meant a new hairstyle. This usually happened around age sixteen or seventeen but there was much variation. This ceremonial adulthood was the endpoint of a long process of development and education that brought the child stage by stage to becoming a full-fledged person. However, the actual age was much less important than many other considerations. What mattered most in the social sense were the various rites of passage for each new stage, as shown also in chapter 3. And even these social stages alone were not the whole story in achieving adulthood. A male samurai had the legal right to adopt an heir only from his seventeenth calendar year (around age sixteen)—which made this a crucial stage of adulthood in terms of securing household continuity. He might also be adult but not inherit his father's position and rank until his father retired at an advanced age, or conversely he might have to legally inherit while still a child because of his father's sudden death.

Passing through the stages of childhood fostered a strong claim to identity as a person of samurai status and inculcated masculinity in contradistinction to femininity. Half of the samurai were women, and half of the residents in most samurai households were commoner servants, so even within the home these two issues were confronted daily. Therefore although the focus of this paper is the socialization of samurai boys, it will also explore their relationships with samurai girls and with servants to highlight the development of status and gender distinctions.

Status issues were particularly important in the last century of the Tokugawa period. The commercial transformation of society and culture that began in the seventeenth century had, by the eighteenth century, grown long fingers that scabbled away at the proper place of samurai in this peaceful world. Economic change engendered increasing protests, and samurai acknowledged that generally declining respect for them was in part associated with increasing criticism of "corrupt and lax" samurai behavior. Minoura Yukinao railed against the "decline" that he saw in samurai society, and in the introductory quotation to this chapter he notes one of the effects of status anxiety on the raising of samurai children: Families wished to mark their sons' social status ever earlier in life by, for example, having even very little children wear two swords. He also commented that parents were having all of the ceremonies marking a child's growth and even marriage take place much earlier than in the past (Minoura 2010: 64), suggesting that having the children find their place as samurai adults was a cause of much anxiety for parents. Parents may also have hurried them along the stages of maturity because they worried about their chosen children's survival. Children too had much to be anxious about as they wended the perilous path toward adulthood amid family plans and an uncontrollable world.

## STAYING ALIVE

Children had many obstacles to overcome early in life, including some related to issues of family strategy. In the days before effective contraception, families worldwide had to confront the issue of what to do when there were too many children for the household economy. Abandonment, abortion, and infanticide were much more common than in modern times (Cunningham 1998: 1203–4). In some parts of Japan parents tended to raise many children but sent most of them out into indentured servitude. In other parts of Japan the practices of abortion or infanticide at the time of birth were relatively common. Tosa was such a region, not merely for reasons of poverty but as family strategy (Drixler 2013: 26–27, 78). It was commonly said that samurai families in Tosa generally desired to have no children after they had two sons, raising the “second son as a reserve in case something should happen to the heir” (Yamakawa 1992: 174). Nevertheless, there was continual moral debate over this practice. In 1759 the domain lord issued an order that abortion and infanticide should stop, which drove the practice into hiding (Ōta 1997: 584). The samurai Mori Hirosada copied this order in his diary (“Nikki” 1759.7.29).<sup>2</sup> It became relevant years later in 1772 when in his own home he already had an adopted male heir and his own late-born son, Yoshiki, who was three years old. Hirosada’s wife, Ume, gave birth that year in what he described as a “very easy birth,” but Hirosada finished by writing a phrase that might be understood as “but there was no child” or possibly “but we got rid of the child” (“Nikki” 1772.11.28). He made no mention of subsequent burial, prayers, or rites, writing instead about his wife’s process of recovery. We cannot really know if the cryptic description indicates parental decision or if it meant that a stillbirth occurred. At any rate, limiting the number of potential heirs to two was hardly a uniform custom. Some families raised more. Mori Yoshiki’s second wife, Tachi, bore six children: two daughters and four sons. According to a story related by Yoshiki’s manservant, she was sickly and raising them was difficult for her, especially after her mother-in-law died. When she was pregnant with the sixth, she told Yoshiki she was unable to raise it. This was either a request for an abortion or for help. Yoshiki opted for the latter saying, “Even if there are tens of them children should be raised. If you can’t do it, I’ll take care of it, protect it, and raise it. Indeed even though Yoshiki had many older sons he never carried them as babies or did things like that, but he was always holding Shirō. Because there was no grandmother he often made rice milk and fed it to Shirō himself” (“Sendai gyōjo”: folio 94). In terms of family strategy, having four sons meant that three of them would have to hunt for positions as adults, perhaps to end up as an unplaceable younger brother living in the home. As it turned out, all three of the younger sons lucked out by being adopted as heirs of houses in the Mori kin group (“Mori-shi kafu,” vol. 4).

Children were ushered into social reality with a party and naming ceremony that occurred on the seventh night after birth. This was done for both daughters

and sons of the master of the house regardless of whether the mother was the legal wife or a servant. The childhood name given at that ceremony was generally used until the child's coming-of-age ceremony, when he or she received a new name. When Mori Hirosada's daughter Mase was born to his servant girl, he invited many relatives to a celebratory dinner, along with the midwife, doctor, and wet nurse. The relatives brought baby clothes, and Hirosada gave gifts of money and celebratory foods to everyone present and to others who could not come ("Nikki" 1765.11.23–12.1). An almost identical set of events and gift presentations happened when his son Yoshiki was born and given the childhood name Saihachi, suggesting that gender had little to do with this first ceremony of life ("Nikki" 1768.11.1–11.8). Expressions of emotion are rare in the Mori family diaries, but one can sense Hirosada's pleasure at his children's first smile. "Saihachi first smiled this morning. Mase first smiled on the fortieth day after her birth. Saihachi first smiled on his fortieth day, today!" ("Nikki" 1768.12.10). He also devoted equal attention to recording their illnesses, occasional accidents, and visits to the houses of relatives or festivals.

Various ceremonies were gender specific from early on. After having their heads shaved from birth until around age two, hairstyles for infants gradually differentiated their gender. Mase celebrated her first Girls Day by receiving gifts of dolls and flowers ("Nikki" 1766.3.3). Saihachi (Yoshiki) would likely have received traditional manly gifts such as swords and folding fans on his first Boys Day (1769.5.5) and a particular type of colorful flag would have been flown on the family property. Unfortunately the diary for that year no longer survives (Kōchi Chihōshi Kenkyūkai 1980: 43–44; Ōta 2011: 95–107).

The parents would also have to choose whether or not to register the children with the domain. Any child born to a servant or concubine would be recognized only if the samurai father acknowledged it. Yoshiki's mother, Ume, had a more complicated status than Mase's mother, Riso, though both had entered the household as servants. Hirosada had held a wedding ceremony and party to designate Ume as his wife. However, because she was of commoner origin, she legally remained a concubine in the eyes of the domain, which accepted only samurai women as legal wives (Roberts 2002: 27–28). Hirosada acknowledged Yoshiki but already had adopted a nephew, Sanpachi (Hirotake), as his heir. It seems as if an agreement had been made early on that Hirotake would in turn adopt Yoshiki as his son. However Hirotake had married a samurai woman and they had a son. By domain law Hirotake could not adopt a concubine's son in preference to his own by a samurai wife. Therefore what the family chose to do was to not register Hirotake's son at all. He lived in public anonymity until he chanced to die at age ten ("Mori-shi kafu," vol. 4).

Parents knew that the children they chose to raise would have to confront many diseases. Mortality was high, and illness caused much anxiety. Children frequently encountered the death of siblings, but the documents that relate their feelings are mostly the memoirs of adults. In his early teens Sasaki Takayuki saw

a little sister die at seven months and a brother die at three days. “It was a boy, and we were happy, but it immediately turned into an unhappiness” that sent his generally difficult father into a long period of deep depression (Sasaki 1970: 15, 17). Mori Yoshiki’s son by his first wife died after living only a month and a half, and his fourth child, his daughter Aya, died at age three (“Mori-shi kafu” vol. 4, “Nichiroku” 1801.9.7).

Diseases such as smallpox and dysentery often ravaged Tosa, like the rest of Japan, regardless of status and class, but some health issues particularly affected children of samurai status because of the diet associated with their status. Beriberi is a disease caused by a deficiency in thiamine, which generally harms nerve function and results in weakness, body pains, confusion, emotional disturbance and—especially in children—weight loss and death. In East Asia at this time it commonly occurred when people maintained a diet overly dependent on polished rice from which the thiamine, present only in the bran and germ, had been removed. Commoners tended to have more varied diets that included whole grains and were less affected by beriberi than samurai. Although this disease was common and caused great problems in late Tokugawa Japan, its cause was not discovered until the late 1880s (Bay 2008). Writing in 1803 the samurai Minoura Yukinao noted that the disease had seldom occurred in Tosa in the 1740s, but that in recent decades it had become common among samurai. Although this suggests to us that the samurai diet may have been changing, Yukinao’s explanation was that, because it was rare among farmers, laborers and active people, its emergence among samurai must be because they had become less physically active in recent decades (Minoura 2010: 68–69). Many young children died from or struggled with this disease.

Another disease peculiar to children of the samurai class was lead poisoning (Nakashima et al. 1998), which can be said to result from family strategies of status differentiation. This was because the white skin cosmetic with which women of higher status painted themselves was lead-based, and breasts offered to infants were often covered with the cosmetic as a sign of respect. Analyses of lead levels in the bones excavated from samurai graves reveal that female samurai levels of lead were much higher than those of males, and that infants’ levels were much higher than adults, probably brought about by ingestion of lead through suckling (Nakashima 2011). The levels were high enough to suggest widespread lead poisoning that would have led to many neurological, emotional, and learning disorders and forms of weakness. These common diseases, beriberi and lead poisoning, not only had long-term implications for personal development but also posed problems when affected children were put up as heirs. Mori Yoshiki once became involved as a consultant in a difficult situation in which a dying man wanted his son to be recognized as his heir even though the three-year-old child could not yet manage to stand up on his own legs. Although this troubled relatives and officials, ultimately Yoshiki, a key official at the time, recommended inheritance in the hope that things would turn out all right (“Nichiroku” 1800.8.2).

The diaries reveal that families commonly responded to a child's illness by calling on the help of relatives, doctors, gods, and Buddhas. Women often traveled between homes to assist with caring for the sick. When Sasaki Takayuki fell gravely ill at age two, his family made offerings for prayer at the famous Gion shrine in distant Kyoto (three hundred kilometers away) for his recovery. When he became better the family changed his name to Matsunosuke according to the oath they had offered to the shrine (Sasaki 1970: 6). When Mori Hirosada's adopted son, Hirotake, contracted smallpox at age seven he was seriously ill for two weeks. Hirosada called numerous doctors, and many relatives and friends from the neighborhood and even villagers from the fief in Takaoka showed up to offer sympathy and assistance. Following a common religious custom, the family set up a special altar (*hōsōkamidana*) in the household that would be taken down only when the child had recovered. When Hirotake was deemed safe, signaled by pus collecting in his pox, Hirosada immediately called over many relatives to celebrate with a feast, and he sent fish and red beans as celebratory foods as a way of informing others in town. Thirteen villagers from the fief brought a barrel of sake a day later, which they all drank to celebrate. All of this worry, work, and celebration integrated a large community of family, kin, and friends around Hirotake and his presence in the house ("Nikki" 1759.2.26–1759.3.12). One might be tempted to think that the celebrations were particularly lavish because of Hirotake's social importance as Hirosada's adopted heir, yet when Hirosada's daughter Mase, whom he had by a servant, became ill with smallpox the course of events was quite similar. They ended with a grand party of friends and relatives for which professional female entertainers were hired, and everyone "celebrated festively" late into the night ("Nikki" 1772.12.15–12.26).

When the children of the servants of the household were ill, Hirosada's response was much more limited. He mentioned their births and the outcome of their illnesses but recovery was not an occasion for a full household celebration ("Nikki" 1760.8.7, 1765.3.28, 1765.11.13). A slight exception was when the son of his hereditary chief manservant was ill with smallpox. Then the family set up a shrine and held an internal household celebration when he recovered ("Nikki" 1765.11.5). The graduated levels of status that derived through relationship to the father of the household were thus marked clearly on these occasions of sadness, anxiety, and joy.

#### LEARNING DESIRABLE PERSONAL QUALITIES

Mori Yoshiki's mother told her grandchildren about how good he was when he was little: "When he was just a toddler he was different from most children in that he understood things well. He would ask me to go to bed with him, and if I were preparing cotton for spinning I would say, 'After I have prepared so many rolls of cotton.' Even if it took some time he would not press me but instead counted

how many rolls to go while he waited” (“Sendai gyōjo,” folio 66). This introduces us to a common scenario of children pressuring their parents to lay down with them while they go to sleep, and the parent training the child in the virtues of self-restraint and cooperation. One of the leading Japanese scholars of early modern childhood, Ōta Motoko, argues that teaching the denial of self-interest and personal desire in order to be able to perform one’s duty was typical of Edo-period education for samurai children (Ōta 2011: 74).

The Tosa documents reveal many examples of how samurai taught self-denial and self-control while educating their children. One nineteenth-century retainer writing about notable people of the domain said of Mori Yoshiki, “He was always saying that wearing a *haori* jacket showed a lack of resolute preparedness, and even in the cold he would not let his children and servants wear them” (“Shikishō, Chōnai hikki”). Yoshiki also tried to raise his children to express emotions in ways he thought proper. His manservant recalled, “When his boys sniffled [holding back tears], he would scold, ‘When you cry, cry fully! Men don’t sniffle!’ and with that they always stopped crying” (“Sendai gyōjo,” folio 93). Whether the goal was to encourage emotional restraint or intentional expressiveness is unclear but it fits his ideal of a controlled but assertive masculinity.

Yoshiki died relatively young at age thirty-nine, but his wife Tachi frequently used stories about his behavior to authorize her instructions to her still-young children in the importance of self-control and family identity. According to an account told by their son Harue,

My dear mother was always saying to us, “No matter how hot it became, your father never passed time without his clothes on, he did not take afternoon naps, and if he was not laboring, he did not drop his kimono off his shoulders. When he sat he neither stretched his legs out nor put his knees sideways. When he slept he did not use just a thin informal belt and he did not let his hair get messed up. No matter the time, if something came up he would respond appropriately, and he always made sure to be ready to meet guests immediately. He learned these things from the house lessons of his own father, Hirosada, and indeed those who are his descendants should take these to heart” (“Sendai gyōjo,” folio 58).

In his later years Yoshiki was assigned to the post of caretaker of the daimyo’s son, and he even chided this exalted person about being tough and prepared like a warrior. As he told this eight-year-old heir, “Daimyo are warriors! Even when the situation calls for proceeding in a carriage or a horse, walking is the proper form for a daimyo!” His words surprised the young lord who was accustomed to being treated with more deference. Later that night at his bath the young lord confided to his attendant, “No one has ever spoken to me like that before” (“Genshin-kō jiji,” folios 2–3).

Yoshiki may have been a bit extreme, but the basic values he tried to instill in his children were common and well recognized. Sasaki Takayuki described in his memoirs how family members, particularly his father, praised him for behavior

that showed self-control, confidence, and resolve enacted on behalf of the household, values that were promoted by samurai authorities who rewarded precocious filial piety displayed by children (Van Steenpaal 2016). When Takayuki was only five, he had his first audience with the domain lord. Most families provided a relative to accompany small children, but his father sent him alone. Takayuki behaved “as if there were nothing at all to be fearful about; just another normal thing to do. . . . When I came home my father and others all praised me, and I remember how happy I felt” (Sasaki 1970: 10).

Tadayuki’s father had greater trouble with his own emotions. He blamed himself for causing his brother’s suicide, and became sleepless, visiting the brother’s grave nightly. His emotional disturbance caused young Takayuki much anxiety: “My childish heart felt this, and I worried much” (Sasaki 1970: 9). The following year his father became suicidal and slashed his face with a blade. Young Takayuki had to run to the neighbors to ask for help to prevent his father from killing himself. Ultimately the relatives built a cage in the house to keep him in until he recovered. The family finances became so bad at that point that the family sold all of the weapons and armor except for one set that had belonged to his great grandfather Chūsaburō. Chūsaburō was a particularly revered man who had restored the fortunes of the house in the 1780s (Roberts 1997: 581–83, 594–96), and this armor had heirloom significance. Yet eventually finances became so tight that even this armor had to be used to get money. The relatives found a wealthy samurai who would buy it with the promise of reselling it to Takayuki when Takayuki was able. He was still just six years old but he was deeply moved and declared to his elder relatives, “Without doubt, I will one day buy it back!” for which he remembers them praising him (Sasaki 1970: 10–11).

A collective endemic anxiety over the continuity of the household was instilled in children at an early age. Samurai households were only one sad crime or untimely death away from destruction, and incidents of household termination occurred often especially among the poorer, more marginal households. Takayuki’s father was deemed better after a year. The family let him out of his cage and he returned to performing his duties. He nevertheless remained an extremely sensitive and difficult person, often so depressed that he could hardly do anything. All the relatives commented on it, one of them saying, “There is a bolt of lightning waiting over the Sasaki household day and night. When it will fall we don’t know, but there is nothing one can do but hold our breath and wait for the moment.” Takayuki writes about how often he became anxious about his father and the family on this account, but nevertheless said that despite his own status as an adopted son, his father “loved and cared for me deeply. His difficulties were because of his illness” (Sasaki 1970: 18). Takayuki’s status as adopted son made him, early on in life, all the more aware of the problems of household continuity. His adoptive father too likely loved and cared for his heir all the more because Takayuki represented the fulfillment of his duties to maintain household continuity.

The sons of samurai in the late eighteenth century were educated into becoming members of the warrior class during an era of extended peace. This involved a delicate mix of expressing a willingness to use violence to defend one's honor while nevertheless showing restraint. The domain often meted out punishments following violent incidents to serve as a warning to encourage restraint, yet samurai who were not ready to be violent were seen as somehow not proper samurai. Many samurai commonly expressed such anxieties, such the seventy-seven-year-old samurai Minoura Yukinao, who wrote in 1803 about how young samurai were increasingly unlikely to punish a person of equal or lower status for being rude. In the old days, he said, they would often use their swords in response to rudeness. These days they would go home angry and discuss the event with family members who would usually arrange for a monk or a doctor to be a go-between to make peace between the parties even when one was of lower status. "This is because the customs of our domain have declined terribly, and samurai forget their way" (Minoura 2010: 77). This suggests that civility and restraint were becoming more important socially in the late Edo period even among samurai youth. Mori Yoshiki himself was deeply invested in a military identity and often wrote about his worries that samurai were losing their martial character, using such phrases as "Daimyo these days don't know what it means to be a warrior!"

Yoshiki's chief manservant told a number of stories related to childrearing that make Yoshiki appear to be a severe figure who encouraged a tough manliness. On one occasion in 1806, Yoshiki's six-year-old son, Komaji, came home crying after being teased by a neighborhood samurai boy. Yoshiki was furious and sent out a manservant with his son saying, "It isn't over if you just come home crying. Go cut down your opponent, and I won't let you back in the house until you do!" ("Sendai gyōjo," folio 92). Fortunately some women of the house overheard this and quickly ran over to the neighbors to garner polite apologies so that the day ended without violence. It is likely that Yoshiki's intent was performative—not really a hope that his son would kill a neighbor—and that he depended on others to smooth things over. Still one must wonder what went on in the mind of his six-year-old son at that time.

Indeed Yoshiki chides himself for his concern for his children. During a lengthy government trip inspecting the villages of the domain he worried about reports from home that his eldest son had dysentery: "Here I write about the House Elder being weak when traveling, and yet my heart is so weak about just one child that I write thoughts just as they come to me." He both fears and acknowledges his love for his son. The fear is that parental affection will make his son undisciplined and unwilling to face hardship, qualities which Yoshiki saw as important to being a manly samurai.

#### FINDING ONE'S PLACE AMONG OTHER YOUTHS

An important component to growing up was learning how to interact with superiors, peers, and inferiors as well as developing a network of friends and rivals that

might endure over a lifetime. After samurai sons reached the age of six, they began learning to read outside of the home and by their mid-teens they were learning many military arts as well, gradually socializing them into the values of the community of peers that they would join as adults. These interactions resulted in the formation of memories both collective and individual that structured friendships and created enemies.

Diaries and memoirs are filled with accounts of children's interactions with one another. Hirosada and Yoshiki's diaries reveal that they and their male children participated in classes and the informal practice of many military skills. Sasaki Takayuki noted how this made him aware of the importance of status distinctions: When he was seven he began commuting to a school that happened to have many high-status retainers in it. He could not afford his own books because of his family's low status and income. He remembers frequently being slighted and treated with contempt, noting some of the worst offenders by name. "I felt so mortified and hoped for a future day when I could push them down" (Sasaki 1970: 14). He had friends though and remembers how when he was seven he listened with interest to letters read aloud by one of his fourteen-year-old friends describing the fighting at the time of Ōshio Heihachirō's 1837 rebellion in Osaka. Two months later he was invited to the home of a wealthier friend where in the garden they had set up figurines and fired off miniature cannons recreating the rebellion. "It was so interesting to my child's heart. I eagerly hoped that war would occur" (Sasaki 1970: 13). Starting at age ten he and his friends began reading military texts and stories of fighting on their own. A friend of his had a copy of the famous tale *Revenge Killing at Tenka Teahouse* (Tenka Chaya no adauchi) and read it to Takayuki, who consumed it with interest (Sasaki 1970: 19). He began studying military skills such as swordsmanship and the spear when he turned fourteen (Sasaki 1970: 23), and entered horsemanship school at age seventeen. However this latter experience became yet another disappointing lesson in the ways of the samurai world. The teacher would only actually teach students who gave him gifts and provided him with dinners. Poor students such as Takayuki found themselves left out, and he soon quit (Sasaki 1970: 30). It is little surprise that when he reached adulthood he became part of a political faction that actively resisted the power of the traditional elite houses.

Other forms of socialization were less structured. Youths often ran around together unsupervised and they commonly created gangs. In these gangs they began forming lifelong friendships and learned about modes of aggression, competitive manliness, obedience to hierarchies, and group unity—qualities important in adulthood. According to Minoura Yukinao, "Samurai children and younger brothers gather themselves into gangs with names. They make new members sign strict oaths and become very close to each other, so as to maintain what is righteous. I hear that the young ones are ordered around by the older ones who are reaching adulthood" (Minoura 2010: 73).

Mori Yoshiki described in his diary how such gangs competed with each other at a Dragon King festival on the bay by the castle town in 1799. One gang embarked on two large houseboats decorated with dozens of lanterns and crossed to the opposite shore, where the other gang was waiting in many small boats. It attacked the larger boats in an attempt to cut down the lanterns while also launching fireworks from the land. The two large vessels fired their own “shooting stars” at the little boats as well. When the fireworks ran out, the smaller boats closed, and the youths on them began cutting down the lanterns with their short swords. Just as the brawl began turning into a more serious fight, both sides retreated, yelling that they would meet again (“Nichiroku” 1799.6.15). Such rowdiness would not have been tolerated between adults, but it helped bond the youths socially to each other in forms of aggressive masculinity and team building that constituted a preparation for the usually more restrained behavior of adulthood.

Of course there were times when such behavior went too far, and groups of unruly youths ended up punished by the domain for causing disturbances. On such occasions the fathers were punished as well for the crime of “not properly managing their households.” In the late Tokugawa period such incidents occurred in the castle town every few years (“Okachū hengi”). For example, when the youth Teshima Kihachi and a number of his friends suddenly approached his father, who was a government official, and appealed “in an overly forceful and disrespectful manner” about governmental matters—both rude in itself and beyond their station in politics—this caught the attention of other domain officials. The father’s punishment was comparatively light—a period of “circumspection” that was lifted after a few days—but such public shaming became a part of the permanent record of the household lineages maintained by the domain (“Osamuraichū senzo sho keizu chō,” vol. 54). If the youth’s crimes were too severe, the punishments rose in severity even to disenfeoffment and banishment, thus effectively ending the household.

Youths often formed intimate bonds, and individual exchanges of oaths testifying to devotion between senior and younger youths who developed romantic and sexual relationships were quite common (Moriguchi 1996). These relationships often deeply involved the parents, whose permission was sought by suitors. This permission was important because it helped to ensure a serial monogamy in these relations and thereby to prevent disruptive conflicts between suitors that might lead to domain punishments. The evidence of Mori Hirosada’s diary suggests that such relationships were common among youths from their early to late teens. At age sixteen, his adopted son, Hirotake, “became infatuated with Watanabe Yakuma’s son and heir, Kichitarō.” While Hirotake waited at home with seven friends, two others went to Yakuma to declare Hirotake’s love. Yakuma said that although he had no objections, his son might already be involved with someone else. He would check with his son and respond later. As it turned out, Kichitarō, who was fifteen, already had a lover in another youth who was

unwilling to let go, so the father told Hirotake to “please stop thinking about” Kichitarō. Hirotake did so, and the matter ended peaceably (“Nikki” 1768.10.23, Moriguchi 1996: 49–50).

A similar incident in another Mori household in the kin group, one that did not resolve so cleanly, reveals how extensive kin networks could be affected by youthful emotions. In that case nineteen-year-old Mori Jūjirō showed up at the house of Ishikawa Sōzaemon and stated his desire to have a lover’s relationship with his son Ichinosuke. The father said he was favorable to the idea and “thought highly” of Jūjirō but he was presently busy with domain business. He promised to check later with his son and sent Jūjirō home. As it turned out, his son was already in a relationship with a youth from the Kataoka family. Jūjirō thought that the father told him at this point that he should “wait until a way could be opened up,” suggesting perhaps that the Kataoka would give up the relationship, but this only complicated the situation. Soon members of the Mori, Ishikawa, and Kataoka kin groups gathered to discuss the situation, but none gave in. The was the kind of conflict that would attract domain attention. When punishment appeared in the offing, the kin groups invited in outside mediators who resolved things by having the Kataoka youth give up his relationship with the young Ichinosuke and Jūjirō promise not to press his suit: in effect a divorce all around (“Nikki” 1762.1.21). Personal honor was bound up in these youthful love relationships (Schalow 1990: 27–32). This honor might lead to fights, and a youth’s honor was also tied to that of his kin group, both factors that encouraged families to become deeply involved in the management and outcomes of these relationships.

Intimate relationships were thus made in familial and social contexts but they were generally understood to be temporary, usually ending when the younger partner grew into adulthood. Although such relationships often created long-term bonds of friendship even after they ended, one more incident from Hirosada’s diary reveals complications that might arise when a youth exited a relationship. In 1769 when Fukuoka Kyūhachirō “had his *genpuku* ceremony and became a man,” he sent notice via a friend to his adult lover that he wished to end the relationship. The lover did not want to end the relationship, and it took a number of people to finally get him to agree. However he still would not return the written oath that Kyūhachirō had given him, and this oath “had many ridiculous things in it. Allowing it to remain [in the lover’s hands] would be very problematic for Kyūhachirō’s future” (“Nikki” 1770.i6.14). Quite possibly it contained promises to obey the lover even if the lord’s government ordered otherwise—a display of ultimate devotion, but one that could prove fatal if made public during adulthood. Finally after much negotiation the lover returned the oath.

Although Hirosada’s diary frequently refers to the emotions of intimate friendship, infatuation, and love (*chiin*, *shūshin*, *nengoro*) that male youths had for each other, it is significant that no such language is used for the relationships between youthful men and women—or for that matter between adult men and women,

although records of heterosexual relationships abound in his life and diary. This probably had to do with notions of masculinity that were tied to a gender hierarchy that demeaned women and to a large degree turned them into men's property. Social norms promoted a feeling that it would be degrading to display affection for a woman too publicly (Schalow 1990: 4–5, 49–56). For a man to express his close relationship with another young man made him manly, while to do so concerning women put him in danger of becoming “womanly.”

Male relationships with women seem to have been handled with much more public emotional restraint. Hirosada's diary contains many discussions of marriage negotiations but the only word signifying attachment was *shomō* which means “want to have” or “desire to have,” and can be applied to objects as well as people. Furthermore, the desiring party was the youth's father rather than the youth himself. Unlike in male-male relationships, individuals did not carry out the negotiations. No son would suddenly show up at a man's house asking for his daughter. Instead negotiations would begin with the arrival of a third party who would say “so-and-so's son wants your daughter in marriage.” In Hirosada's case his daughter Otsune was first engaged that way to Inoue Saemon, whose father sent a messenger (“Nikki” 1760.2.19). Later her fiancé died, and a different family likewise sent Hirosada a request. The request on behalf of Hirosada's son Hirotake, made via Sasaki Kurōemon, for the hand of Hayashi Seigo's daughter was likewise unemotional—the Hayashi family's response that “we have no difficulty with it” led to marriage (“Nikki” 1764.2.24).

This is not to say that youths might not have feelings of attachment to women, but rather that it was unseemly to express such feelings. Sasaki Takayuki wrote that samurai youths used to tease each other by walking in groups around town and singing the names of something or someone that a youth loved in front of his house gate as if they were selling them, including sometimes the names of commoner women (Sasaki 1970: 37). He does not mention teasing about feelings toward women of samurai status. That would likely have been too sensitive a topic to families to tease about publicly even if such feelings existed, and they would have been dangerous to honor. At any rate in this homosocial world, youthful males and females of samurai status had little opportunity for interaction outside the family. Decisions about marriage were much more a matter between the young people's families than between the young people themselves and might even happen in their childhood. This does not mean that youthful emotions were ignored, and youthful divorce was quite common.

Minoura Yukinao wrote that by the start of the nineteenth century, families were rushing everything for their children, including arranging their marriages at younger and younger ages. “Because they do not yet know the way of adulthood, the husband looks askance at his wife and then they divorce, leading to relations between hitherto friendly families suddenly ceasing in a morning” (Minoura 2010: 64). One strategy that families used to deal with this was to have the daughter live informally in the groom's home for some months beforehand to see if the couple

was compatible. Sasaki Takayuki writes that the daughter of a fellow samurai came to live with him in informal marriage when he was sixteen, but even so after four months they divorced. His second marriage, begun at age seventeen, lasted only until he was nineteen (Sasaki 1970: 30–31, 33, 47). In 1760 Mori Hirosada engaged his thirteen-year-old daughter Otsune to Inoue Saemon, the son of a close friend, but she remained at home until she was old enough to actually marry.

## CONCLUSION

Samurai children were highly valued particularly for their roles in maintaining family continuity, and emotional bonds were shaped in tandem. Only males could attain the employment with the lord that permitted the continuance of the house, and eldest sons were particularly treasured. However, the widespread use of adoption among samurai families, including the possibility of adopting the husband of the family daughter, meant that all children could play a key role in the continuance of the family. Families devoted substantial resources to the health and life-stage ceremonies of all of the children regardless of gender and whether they were born to the wife or a concubine or were adopted.

Family members strove to train children into behavior that would sustain the continuance of the household, but children also had their own occasionally disruptive desires and plans. Youthful love or dislike might end up embroiling families and kin groups in troublesome conflicts or conversely might help to create friendly associations. Additionally, adults and children alike confronted the frequent vicissitudes of accident and illness that sometimes emerged from family strategies and sometimes randomly intruded into plans for success. But the goal of keeping household status and income from one generation to the next remained, and the legal framework required successful inheritance and transition to a new male heir who would achieve adulthood.

It is impossible to define a clear end to samurai childhood in a generalized way because the many markers of adulthood in samurai society did not occur in coordination or at rigidly prescribed ages. The *genpuku* adulthood ceremony in which sons had their hair cut according to adult fashion was certainly an important moment, but it might happen so early as to make it only a partial marker of becoming a full-fledged man, as happened with Sasaki Takayuki, who was fourteen and still just finding his way in school among peers (Sasaki 1970: 22). Marriage also might happen young but end quickly. Perhaps it was increasing anxiety over status and familial success, evident in the latter half of the Tokugawa period, that led to the earlier enactments of such markers of advancement toward adulthood. Seventeen was an age that legally allowed a man to adopt an heir but he did not become family head until his father retired or died. Family headship might occur at an earlier age than adulthood as we have seen in the case of the three-year-old

child who still could not yet walk becoming the head of samurai household. Hiro-sada became legal head of his house at age fourteen and Yoshiki at age nine. Even though family life was filled with ceremonies marking stages of childhood and finally entry into adulthood, life itself was infinitely complex and samurai families adjusted in the interest of maintaining the legal samurai household upon which so many people depended.

## NOTES

1. Japanese in the Edo period counted age differently than in the modern era, counting not by birthdays but by how many calendar years one had lived in. A person born in November was immediately 1 *sai* and next January was 2 *sai* because he or she had lived in two calendar years. I present approximate Western ages in this chapter, made by subtracting one year from the *sai*.

2. Dates refer to those in the documents, based on the Tokugawa period lunar-solar calendar, presenting the year, month, day, but with the year converted to the approximate Gregorian calendar year. 1772.11.28 corresponds to the Gregorian December 22, 1772.

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