

**THE LIFE CONDITION PATTERN OF THE "AMAS" (PROFESSIONAL FEMALE DIVER) IN SHIMA, MIE PREFECTURE (PART 1). -THE CHANGE ON THE FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF KINSHIP-.
OKADA T.*, MIWA S.*, YAGI K.+, YATAZAWA N.#, *Gifu Women's University, 80 Taroumaru, Gifu 502-25, Japan, +Nanzan International High School, #Junior College of Toyota.**

The Age Difference Among "Ama" Couples

For women in the Shima Peninsula of Mie Prefecture in Japan, diving and hunting shellfish in the ocean has long been a major occupation. Their work brings substantial income into their household, which is highly appreciated by all family members. Such women are called "ama" in Japanese. Although the number of "ama" has been decreasing since Japan has become an industrialized nation, they still carry an interesting aspect of the Japanese women. Wives in the Shima Peninsula were actually a few to several years older than their husbands. Such characteristic age difference was, in fact, derived from a necessity for these women to have to obtain certain skills in hunting shellfish in the sea before they got married, and such efforts of women in the occupation were greatly appreciated by men in the community.

Changes Of Japanese Families

Between 1972 and 1992 Japanese economy experienced drastic changes: so-called oil shocks in the early 1970s and burst-bubble shocks in the early 1990s. During the two decades Japanese families also experienced drastic changes. Some of these changes are: (a) A "nuclear family" has become a common norm. In the past it was a tradition in Japan for a couple of generations of families to live together under same roof. When Japanese economy started to grow, however, many young people left their local communities to find jobs in large cities. They eventually got married and formed a family in the city only with a married couple and their children, in 1960s it was perceived as a new phenomenon in Japan, and was called "a nuclear family."(b) Under such tradition in Japan young people had also lived with their parents until they got married. During the survey period, however, both men and women demonstrated to be marrying later, if ever, meaning that parents and children lived together for much longer period than past decades.(c) Because many Japanese today live a longer life, more and more Japanese people have an extended family, and keep such relationship for a longer period than before.(d) More and more Japanese families have less and less children, resulting that the number of collateral family members,has been decreasing.