

Household Socioeconomic Status and Mortality at Different Stages of Life: Evidence from Three Northeastern Villages, 1708–1870

世帯の社会経済的地位と死亡：近世東北3農村の事例

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This study examines the relationships between household socioeconomic status and mortality among males and females at different stages of life in three farming villages in northeastern Japan from 1708 to 1870. Using micro-level data drawn from the local population registers called "*ninbetsu-aratame-cho*" in the villages of Shimomoriya, Niita and Hidenoyama in the Nihonmatsu Domain (the middle part of Fukushima prefecture today), we examine the effects of household socioeconomic status on the probability of dying for the two sexes at different life stages, controlling for other socioeconomic and household factors. In a preindustrial society in which public health and social welfare measures were under-developed, family and household were much more important than today in determining people's chances of survival. Especially in preindustrial farming communities in which households were the primary unit of production as well as that of consumption, the likelihood of dying among individual men and women are thought to have differed markedly by the social and economic status of the household to which they belonged.

Specifically, we first touch on the backgrounds of this study, including the general population trends and changing living standards in Tokugawa Japan, and the family systems in the northeastern region. We next explain the settings of this study, grain price and agrarian economy in Tokugawa Japan, household and village organizations, and changes in local economic conditions and policy contexts. We also explain the data and variables of the multivariate analysis model used by this study. We then estimate the levels and patterns of mortality by sex in our three study villages, based on life tables. Finally, we examine in the multivariate context how household socioeconomic status, as measured by landholding, influenced the risk of death among individual males and females at three different life stages--childhood, adulthood, and old age--in the three study villages, using the discrete-time event history analysis model. The paper concludes with summary of findings and discussion of their implications.