



# Why Can ' t We Drink? Understanding the Ambiguity in the Adult-Child Distinction in Modern Japan by Looking at a Half-Century Discussion on the Minimum Age Limit for Drinking

著者	MOTOMORI Eriko
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# Why Can't We Drink?

Understanding the Ambiguity in the Adult-Child Distinction  
in Modern Japan by Looking at a Half-Century Discussion  
on the Minimum Age Limit for Drinking

Eriko MOTOMORI

## 1 Why is 20 the legal drinking age in Japan?

“You cannot drink until you turn 20.” “Drinking by minors is prohibited by law.” In Japan, these words appear before our eyes every time we see an advertisement for alcohol. However, how many Japanese people know the name of the law? It is called the Act Prohibiting Minors from Drinking (*Miseinensha Inshu Kinshi Hō*). It consists of only four articles. Article 1 of this act states, “Those who are under 20 years of age cannot drink alcohol.”

However, how was 20 determined as the minimum legal age for drinking in the first place? Most of us know that the act has not been properly followed. In 2000, a financial penalty was added for sellers who knowingly sell alcohol to a minor. In 2001, the law was amended to obligate sellers to check the ages of their customers. In 2005, the Brewers Association launched “STOP! Underage Drinking” Project. Movements to increase awareness of the rule have not, however, eradicated the number of rule breakers completely, especially among 18- and 19-year-olds.<sup>(1)</sup> We tend to believe that alcohol is for adults, but who can explain clearly why the line was drawn at age 20, the age of majority in Japan?<sup>(2)</sup> What was the reason for drawing this

line?

The history of the Act Prohibiting Minors from Drinking could also be called the history of a search for answers. The bill was proposed in the Imperial Diet in 1901 but was discussed for 22 years before it was enacted in 1922. Moreover, another discussion regarding whether the age limit should be raised continued for another quarter-century. The sometimes-absurd discussions can trigger thoughts about the meaning of the “adult-child” distinction as well as that of alcohol for those of us in Japan. This paper provides further details of these discussions from the proceedings of the Diet.<sup>(3)</sup>

In the study of social history, the conceptual constellations surrounding childhood, such as child–development–protection, child–socialization–education, and child–nation, are thought to be modern phenomena (see Ariès 1960, Donzelot 1977). However, even amid modernity, the constellations have not been stable. The mentality to prohibit non-adults from drinking a substance that could dissolve modern subjectivity is certainly related to the modern constellations, but at the same time, the existence of strong opposition illustrates the coexistence of various discourses. Scholars associated with the sociology of childhood, such as Lee (2001) and Prout (2005) — whom Ryan (2012) refers to as the “New Wave” — advocate tracing the “heterogeneous network of the social” in order to reconsider the typical modern dichotomies surrounding childhood studies such as being/becoming, nature/culture, and agency/structure. This paper illustrates heterogeneity by examining the arbitrariness of the seemingly firm adult-child dichotomy in the modern state as well as the biological and psychological explanations for the distinction.

## 2 Arguments of the Act's Proposer

Shō Nemoto was the lower house representative who, for 22 years, was actively involved in proposing the bills for the Act Prohibiting Minors from Drinking. By looking at his arguments for the bills, we can follow not only how the logic represented the typical modern notion of childhood but also how often this logic deviated from that notion.

Nemoto was born in a former Samurai family and was a Christian who studied in the United States before entering the House of Representatives, the lower house. In 1900, one year before he first proposed the act, he proposed and successfully passed the Act Prohibiting Minors from Smoking (*Miseinensha Kitsuen Kinshi Hō*). His repeated proposal to prohibit minors from drinking was depicted in a satirical magazine as follows: “Having repeated the same points in the same clothes and with the same attitude every year, he is counted as one of the popular figures in the Diet” (Sandē sha ed. 1913: 118).

The point Nemoto kept repeating was that minors were “future fathers and mothers” and were necessary for the nation’s development, as indicated below:

Things related to minors are matters of great importance for the state. [...] I think we should put the greatest emphasis on ensuring minors’ good health and their complete intellectual development. (21RP, 1904)

Before his success with the acts prohibiting smoking and drinking, Nemoto introduced the Free Compulsory Education Act in 1899. His

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motivation to prohibit minors from drinking alcohol could be related to his belief that children and youth should be included in the state education system that had just been established to cultivate them as human resources to serve the state, as explained below:

The bodies of the present youth are never their own private bodies but the bodies of the state, the bodies of Imperial Japanese subjects. In particular, the state subsidizes boys and girls. (22RC, 1906)

However, this modern logic that the state should pay for compulsory education and that boys and girls should concentrate on their studies does not explain why minors were chosen for the target category. The period of compulsory education in the 1900 Primary School Act was only four years, from ages six to ten. Moreover, Nemoto interchanged the term “minors” with “students,” saying in his first proposal that “[t]he parents of our country are minors, in other words, students” (15RP, 1901). Later, he repeatedly used the same case of vandalism caused by orgiastic university students over the age of 20 as an example of the “harms of alcohol.” His intention for students to concentrate on their academic activities was not at all consistent with the details of the bill intended to prohibit minors from drinking alcohol or other existing laws. Even more confusing, when questioned why he was targeting minors and not students, he admitted that he chose minors simply because many developed countries had distinguished between minors and those who had reached the age of majority (15RP, 1901).<sup>(4)</sup>

In sum, the reason for choosing minors for the target category was not clear from the very beginning. There was the aim of establishing a system

for realizing the modern conception of childhood, but it was constantly being dislocated either intentionally or unintentionally. Even now, the fact that the age of 20 does not correlate with the age of graduating from high school (18) or university (22 or over) makes this act confusing. This confusion, however, was there from the beginning.

### 3 Strong Opposition Arguments

Nemoto's logic was not widely accepted. Strong opposition left the bill incomplete, and it was rejected repeatedly for 22 years. By looking at the opposition arguments, we can see how alcohol and the adult-child distinction were perceived in the early twentieth century in Japan.

The first argument was that the act was incompatible with traditional Japanese drinking customs. The opinion that drinking was inevitable on ceremonial occasions was stated repeatedly.<sup>(5)</sup> At some point, proponents attempted to solve this problem by adding a proviso, stating that “[t]his prohibition shall not be applied on ceremonial occasions,” but opponents countered, “How dare you say minors can commit a crime at their parent's funeral [if the act defines drinking as criminal]?” (Kurajirō Suzuoki, 24RP, 1908). Others brought up the State Shinto, asking, “Is there a person who does not want to offer sacred sake to the Gods, the enshrined ancestors of the Imperial Family?” (Tomoya Itō, 37RP, 1915). There was also a feeling among the people that men could be men by drinking sake and heavy drinkers could be heroes.

However, it is doubtful whether the “traditions” referenced in these arguments were truly traditions. Kunio Yanagida (1939) suggested in his

article entitled “Changes in the Way We Drink Sake” that the circulation of alcohol had increased since the Meiji era, and individuals had begun to drink huge amounts of sake, which had been passed around previously in communities only on special occasions. In that respect, it is probable that the traditional drinking customs at the turn of the twentieth century were already being supported by large amounts of modern capital. Additionally, both the Japanese family system (*ie seido*) and Shintoism can be said to be modern inventions.

The second argument referred to tax revenue:

You all have to bear in mind that prohibiting alcohol will reduce one-seventh of the Japanese revenue, so I would require all of you to reject this ineffective bill for our state so that we can maintain enough (someone shouted “hear, hear”) revenue. (Shun Morimoto, 24RP, 1908)

In prewar Japan, the brewery tax had long been the largest source of tax revenue. Therefore, representatives could officially state and show their agreement regarding the importance of avoiding the restrictions on alcohol consumption, emphasizing it as more important than the protection of children.

In fact, this bill passed the House of Representatives many times. However, the House of Peers, the upper house, eventually rejected it. Some critics think that this situation resulted from the strong relationship between the upper house's representatives and the brewery industry. For example, Katō (1995) pointed out that Tadanao Ishiguro, who could not drink for health reasons but nevertheless opposed the bill, was a distant relative of

Eiichi Shibusawa, who bought the Amanuma Beer Company (which later became Kirin Beer Company).

The third argument was that prohibition of drinking was not a matter of law but a matter related to family, school, and religion—that is, a matter addressing people's morals. It was stated that the act was “a ridiculous bill” because “it trie[d] to regulate all the public health problems, educational problems, moral problems, and social problems by law” (Kurajirō Suzuoki, 21RP, 1904). Opponents of the act felt that such issues should be addressed by families and schools, or “child protection would next require a law to regulate how children go to the toilet and how to dress” (Takuzō Hanai, 16RP, 1902).<sup>(6)</sup> Additionally, difficulty in regulating drinking indoors could harm the power of the law and legislative authority.

The last argument was not in opposition to the law but to the age limitation. As we saw in the previous chapter, Nemoto was confused over whether the law should draw the line at a specific age or differentiate between students and workers. There were quite a few opinions supporting the view that prohibiting alcohol for farmers and workers would have a negative impact on production; excerpts include the following:

For young productive fishermen, farmers, and workers, alcohol may be their only comfort. (...) I would like to ask your kind favor to allow drinking for workers. (Sadanaga Kiba, 30PP, 1913)

[For youth in rural villages,] providing comfort for their daily suffering and giving them courage for their future through drinking is an ancient and good respected custom in Japan. Is it a good way to prohibit this in



cultivating the nation's power? (Takao Saitō, 30RP, 1913)

There was also the opinion that prohibiting alcohol could result in dangerous thoughts. This belief was especially common in the House of Peers, as illustrated by the following argument: "Unless we allow the laborers a cup of sake for the sacrifice of their work (...), they tend to have complaints and are induced to commit high treason" (Shū Miyake, 27PP, 1911).

In the early twentieth century, it was widely accepted that minors could drink during ceremonies and on other occasions. At least a few representatives thought students should be considered exceptions, but they felt that laborers were expected to drink alcohol to continue their productivity and contribute to tax revenue.

Parallel to the development of the modern sentiment among proponents mentioned in the last chapter, there were different views on childhood. Children and youth were not seen in terms of a monolithic category. Rather, the distinction between students and laborers was more important than the distinction between age groups. At the same time, views on child protection laws were very different from the thoroughly enmeshed network of laws and institutions pertaining to childhood that was allegedly established as part of becoming a modern society (see Donzelot's "tutelary complex"). Would this situation change in the next era?

## 4 Changes in Tone

Some changes took place gradually in the 1910s and 1920s. First, the idea

that all minors were targeted regardless of their social status was gradually accepted. Some found positive aspects in laborers' temperance: "We never lose when worker and laborer productivity is advanced" (Soroku Ehara, 41PP, 1919). Nemoto replied that prohibition became a countermeasure to the possible treason of laborers: "To solve the problem of dangerous thinking, it is best to prohibit minors from alcohol. (...) Among laborers, those who drink alcohol will be induced to treason (laughter arose with the words, 'no, no')" (Shō Nemoto, 44RP, 1921). Moreover, Nemoto and other representatives began to insist that laborers should be temperate to improve their intellectual and physical abilities because they would form the core of the Imperial Army.

With these changes, a reduction in the brewery tax was no longer logically acceptable. One representative asked the Minister of State, "Does the government think that (...) you will make excessive amounts of alcohol and let the people drink as much as they want as long as large tax revenues are secured?" (Shū Miyake, 40PP, 1918). Minister Shimpei Gotō replied that the government did not think the brewery tax was a priority and would decide and push through a law on prohibition for minors when necessary.

Parallel to the above, attitudes toward laws were changing. Laws were thought to endorse morals, and enacting a law was thought to have a moral impact: "Even if actual regulations are difficult to a certain extent, these laws will show today's moral standards to the public and will be effective in integrating the various tangled educational policies" (Koremichi Takami, 41RC, 1919). Enacting the law was also seen as an appeal to the international community: "This act is necessary to declare to the world that we, the Japanese people, are sincerely trying to maintain and care about the future of our youth" (Koreatsu Kurahara, 25RP, 1909).

## 5 A New Discussion on Where to Draw the Line for the Age for Prohibition

At this point, more and more representatives were supporting the bill. However, at the same time, a new discussion arose regarding the suggestion that 25 years of age was more suitable than 20. This idea brought new confusion to the seemingly endless discussion.

Supporters of raising the age to 25 put forth a “medical reason,” as follows:

Dr. [Kuniyoshi] Katayama insists that 20 years of age is not old enough, and 25 years is a better place to draw the line. (...) Humans do not stop developing until 24 or 25 years of age. (Shō Nemoto, 41RC, 1919)

Prohibition until age 25 was thought to be more effective for protecting developing bodies. In addition, it was compatible with the age limits established in the new systems of that period, as described below:

In Japan, people can be members of a youth association until 25 years of age. (...) In my opinion, people are not practitioners in actual society but dependents of their families until they turn 25 years of age. (Koreichirō Morimoto, 42RC, 1920)

However, the argument for the “completion” of human development made the discussion confusing because several lines can be drawn depending on the abilities focused upon. In the 44<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet in 1921, one

representative presented 18 years of age as the completion of development:

According to recent research, (...) Dr. [Yasusaburō] Sakaki at Kyushu University proved that human physical development terminates at the age of 18 and the development of one's abilities terminates one year earlier, and psychological and brain development terminates one year before that. (Yasutarō Okumura, 44RC, 1921)

In terms of institutional integrity, some systems adopted age 25 but others did not. The Civil Code set 20 as the age of majority and the Penal Code set 14 as the age of responsibility. There were (and still are) a variety of lines establishing ages for maturity and immaturity among certain systems and laws. One representative condemned the arbitrariness of drawing the line at 20:

Minors in the Civil Code are defined by considering not physiological standards but the abilities required in the Civil Code, such as intellectual understanding. (...) However, the damage of drinking is related to human physiological development. If you base it on physiological development, you should not use the definition of minors in the Civil Code. Physiological minors must be 25, or if not, you can take a lower age such as 14 or 15. Since the age of responsibility in the Penal Code is set at the age of 14, around 14 might be reasonable. Or, if you set the line according to education, 12 years of age is reasonable since Japanese national education is mandatory until that age. In any case, we should set the line based on some form of reason. (Tadao Saitō, 31RC, 1914)

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In reality, there is no crucial reason for drawing the line at any of these ages. As mentioned earlier, proponents chose 20 years of age or the age of majority only because it was the global standard. There was no evidence on whether there was a behind-the-scenes deal or if it was just a matter of timing, but the Act Prohibiting Minors from Drinking was enacted in the 45<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet in 1922.

In the last discussion, one lower house representative gave his true opinion on the matter.<sup>(7)</sup>

What's wrong with drinking alcohol? Sake has many virtues. With one cup, you can gradually gain power. With two cups, you become unfazed and calm. When you reach ten cups, you feel like flying to the heavens. How could you prohibit this effective drink for minors? (...) Drinking makes them powerful and energetic. Those who collapse when drinking will not serve in an emergency. Adding to this aspect, we should consider the revenue. Mr. Nemoto must be well aware of revenues and expenditures. First of all, the brewery tax is over 188 million yen. If minors don't drink, we will lose 30 million yen. We are pleased to amend the Brewery Tax Act so that Japanese people can drink a little bit more. (...) In sum, I would say that prohibiting minors from drinking will cause both material and psychological losses to our country. (Torakichi Nakano, 45RP, 1922)

The law prohibiting minors from drinking was enacted, seemingly representing the modern ideal of protecting childhood and youth per the development theory and with a connection to the school education system.

However, feelings in favor of underage drinking still existed, even after the official discourse of child protection was embodied in the law and educational system.

## 6 Rehashed Arguments

The story does not end here. A bill to amend this act was proposed by Nemoto's followers, raising the age limit from that of a minor to "those who are less than 25 years of age."

Proponents submitted their "Reasons for Requiring Amendment," which included the same logic we discussed in the previous chapters: 1) 25 years old is the most desirable age because human development terminates at this age, and 2) this age is being adopted in many other social systems, thus making it easy to control illegal behavior.

How this line was being used in other systems was often discussed: "The line includes most of the members of the youth associations (*seinendan*), military officers, and students. It would be suitable to encourage temperance for these people" ("Reasons for Requiring Amendment," 51RP, 1916). "In Japan, 25 years of age has become one typical standard in evaluating people's abilities. For example, voting rights (...)" (Tsunejirō Matsuyama, 37RP, 1935).

However, in addition to age 25, 20 or the age of majority (*teinen*) had also become rooted in Japanese society because it was used in the Civil Code and as the age of conscription. Arguments along this line follow:

It seems inhuman to tell those who have reached the age of majority not to drink. (Kira Motoo, 52RC, 1927)

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Youth who are 20 years old or over can be seen as having legal capacity in the Civil Code. Thus, they are thought to be independent citizens outside of parental control, in general. I am certain that avoiding harm caused by drinking should be a matter of one's self-control. (Yūki Takechi, 64RP, 1933)

Adults are bearing the obligation as nations; in other words, the obligation of conscription, the biggest service of this country. (...) For those adults whom we should respect, prohibition may be equal to looking down on them. (Nabekichi Hirano, 59RP, 1931)

There was also a fear that “[m]ost people from 21 to 25 have already left school and are working in the real world. (...) They are living their own lives. This makes policing more and more difficult” (Kiichi Ogawa, 81RC, 1943).

These opposing views repeatedly led to unending discussions in the lower house. In a sense, drawing the line at either age 20 or 25 was groundless because the development theory had variations. Thus, the concept of an age limit sounded dubious as the discussions continued.

Notably, in the Juvenile Delinquency Act Committee of the 64<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet in 1933, there was an impressive discussion. A representative, Takatarō Sakuta, blatantly insisted that even 25 was not the end of development. Namiya Maruyama, one of the proposers of the bill, answered that 25 years old was the peak of physical and psychological development by presenting as evidence a document entitled “A Report on Students' Psyches and Physiques in Teachers' Colleges All Over Japan” by the Ministry of Education.

However, Taneichirō Nakano said that physical development, such as height and weight, were complete by 20 years of age and the reproductive function of human puberty was fully developed by around age 17 for males and age 15 for females. That argument made the 25-year-old theory meaningless. Jirō Hoshijima suggested, "It is reasonable to draw the line by using common sense or conventional wisdom."

Finally, the long-discussed scientific reasoning and compatibility with other social systems became hollow. Sakuta finished with the following:

I would accept it if you say you chose 25 years of age only because it is common sense. It is enough to say that 25 years of age follows our conventional wisdom. Bringing up the matter of development and so on makes this discussion more complicated. Trying to explain what cannot be explained makes things incompatible. (64RC, 1933)

Though many people were trying to argue for one rule or another, the discussion revealed that any line was based simply on common sense and conventional wisdom.

The bill was repeatedly presented but never passed. The more it was discussed, the more fundamental arguments were rehashed, such as why drinking by minors should be banned and why this matter should be regulated by law.

The discussion that laborers and students should be treated differently reemerged: "How do you plan to treat the more than 170,000 poor laborers?" (Toyokichi Tabuchi, 52RC, 1927). The bill was revised to "minors and students under 25 years of age" (65<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet, 1934), and the name was



changed to “The Act Prohibiting Students from Drinking” (67<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet, 1935). A revision was made that limited the scope to “those who are from 20 to 25 and students or members of youth associations” (75<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet, 1940). Even with these amendments, the bill did not pass the lower house.

The impact on the brewery tax was also rehashed. In the 64<sup>th</sup> Imperial Diet in 1933, a government delegate stated that the government should encourage prohibition, even with a decrease in tax revenue, when thorough research confirmed that prohibition was necessary (64RP, 1933). There seemed to be an atmosphere in which it was difficult to say that revenue was more important than morals and the protection of children, but relevant research had never been conducted. With numerous petitions from brewery unions every year, discussions reached a stalemate.

Certain notions suggesting that drinking was a sign of a mature man and that it was a Japanese tradition were also mentioned. Densosuke Yamazaki elicited laughter when he insisted on the importance of offering sacred sake to multitudinous gods by using the mythological event of “*Ama no Iwato*”<sup>(8)</sup> as an example. He declared that “[a]lcohol strengthens our energy. Prohibiting alcohol for the energetic youth is like castration (applause)” (59RP, 1931).

## 7 Cyclical Arguments

Such discussions for the amendment evoked funny arguments from today's point of view. The ugliest were discussions concerning soldiers and alcohol from the interwar period through the end of World War II. Some insisted that sake was a necessary comfort for soldiers: “Soldiers would be

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oppressed, feeling as if they were caged birds but for some alcohol" (Sadakichi Kageyama, 56RP, 1929). Others thought sake would affect morale: "It is not a matter of the harm of alcohol, but an important matter of the so-called morale of the Imperial Army, isn't it?" (Shigei Asai, 74RC, 1939).

The next statement sounds comedic but the speaker was quite serious:

Can we really exercise our Japanese spirit without alcohol, especially during wartime? (...) I even feel certain that we would not have won the Russo-Japanese War without sake. (Yoshiaki Shōji, 58RC, 1930)

Proponents of the amendment to raise the age limit to 25 were opposed to these opinions, saying (for example), "I feel you should refrain from saying that (...) soldiers cannot fight strongly enough for our country without alcohol" (Namiya Maruyama, 64RP, 1933). However, even the proponents' discussions often became comical. For example, Jutarō Takahashi, a former naval officer, gave an example in which the captain of the battleship Fuji of the famous Tōgō fleet during the Russo-Japanese War ordered his men to drink farewell cups of sake,<sup>(9)</sup> resulting in the useless intoxication of shooters who had to properly aim and shoot the artillery (74RP, 1939).

It is beyond comical that a representative asked the following when the Pacific War against the US was impending:

From the point of enhancing military power, which is better, letting the youth drink sake as we used to do (...) or prohibiting them from drinking to strengthen their energy? I would like to ask the opinion of the Ministry of Welfare. (Nobutaka Shinōten, 81RC, 1943)

## 8 Blurring the Adult-Child Distinction through Intoxication

Is sake a comfort or does it cause decadence? Does it encourage morale or confuse soldiers? The effects of alcohol are uncertain. Alcohol is not a necessity of life in general, but it is for some drink-lovers. In this sense, there is no alternative to it. Rulers have imposed a tax on this “necessary” liquor since the middle ages (see Yunoki 1996: 192). In the modern period, big capital became involved in this relationship, producing and selling huge amounts of alcohol. Governments also tried to collect more taxes by prohibiting home brewing. This “triangle” consisting of consumers, the brewery industry, and the government (Yunoki 1991) might have continued the fruitless discussions for a half-century.

The Act Prohibiting Minors from Drinking was proposed to protect youth in education who were considered crucial to the future of the country. It is true that other countries had already enacted similar laws, and the logic concerning childhood was common among modern states. However, no one knew then (or now) why minors should be protected from alcohol. Physical and psychological development and education were persuasive arguments for some people but not determinate. On one hand, the vague notion that alcohol was for mature men was accepted to some extent. On the other hand, what was considered as mature varied from person to person, especially in an era during which some youth had already enjoyed extended periods of education and suffered from harsh competition; others did not even finish the compulsory primary education. When it comes to drawing the line based on age, no one can prove the importance of any one age among several used in the existing systems.

Alcohol and adults who are thought to be able to enjoy alcohol have ambiguous existences. Simultaneously, this notion incorporates the ambiguity of the modern constellations concerning childhood. The modern linkages of childhood–development–protection and childhood–socialization–education were (and are) not concrete, and there have been a variety of views concerning childhood and alcohol.

Japan is still using the same act with minor amendments that followed the fruitless and vague discussions reviewed in this paper, though the category of children and youth who are protected and socialized in some institutions became more acceptable under the postwar welfare state. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the harms of alcohol on youth cannot be fully proved scientifically since no one can conduct human experiments on children. The existence of diverse feelings in parallel to the official notion on children as people who should be protected and socialized could be causes of some moral panic regarding childhood in late modernity.

#### Endnotes

- (1) Secondary education, which is de facto rather than legally compulsory in Japan, terminates at the age of 18.
- (2) In 1876, the government set the legal age of majority as 20 (*teinen*), although pre-modern customs primarily drew the line at age 15. The 1898 Civil Code followed this line as well. Lowering the age may be going to be officially discussed in the upcoming Diet.
- (3) The proceedings of the Imperial Diet are based on the National Diet Library's database (<http://teikokugikai-i.ndl.go.jp>). The proceedings are cited as follows: name of the speaker, number of the session, R (House of Representatives) or P (House of Peers), P (plenary meeting) or C (committee), and year (e.g., Tarō Yamada, 41RC, 1919). For more details on these documents, see Motomori (2012: 28-29, 55-56).
- (4) During this period, most developed countries set the legal age of majority at 21

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years.

- (5) The minimum legal age to marry under the prewar Civil Code was age 17 for males and age 15 for females. The drinking ceremony at the wedding was thought to be important. Additionally, a minor could become the head of household (*koshu*) with the responsibility of organizing family and community rituals, which necessarily included drinking.
- (6) Interestingly, the speaker was one of the proponents of child protection systems but his view on penal laws led him to oppose the legislation.
- (7) The speaker might have been intoxicated. Traditionally, people would drink during political debates, and drinking in the Diet was not banned until the postwar period.
- (8) "*Ama no Iwato*," which literally means "the rock cave of the sun goddess," is a famous episode from *Kojiki* ("Records of Ancient Matters"). Amaterasu, the sun goddess, hid inside the cave because of the bad behavior of Susanoo, the god of storms, resulting in darkness throughout the world. To coax Amaterasu out of the cave, the other multitudinous gods (*yaoyorozu no kami*) held a drinking party outside. When she peeked out of the cave in curiosity, she was caught, and the world was bathed in light once again.
- (9) Engaging in communal drinking in a sacred atmosphere before a final desperate attack was a custom of the Japanese Imperial Army, though it is said that water was used instead of real sake in many cases.

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