



# **Tough Choices: Bearing an Illegitimate Child in Japan**

*Ekaterina Hertog*

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As is the case in Western industrialized countries, Japan is seeing a rise in the number of unmarried couples, later marriages, and divorces. What sets Japan apart, however, is that the percentage of children born out of wedlock has hardly changed in the past fifty years. This book provides the first systematic study of single motherhood in contemporary Japan.

Seeking to answer why illegitimate births in Japan remain such a rarity, Hertog spent over three years interviewing single mothers, academics, social workers, activists, and policymakers about the beliefs, values, and choices that unmarried Japanese mothers have. Pairing her findings with extensive research, she considers the economic and legal disadvantages these women face, as well as the cultural context that underscores family change and social inequality in Japan. This is the only scholarly account that offers sufficient detail to allow for extensive comparisons with unmarried mothers in the West.

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