

DIJ Forum



In its series of public lectures, the German Institute for Japanese Studies will present on

Thursday, February 09th 2006, 18.30 h

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Maison Franco-Japonaise

Regional Inequality in Japan: Income, Health, Life Style, and Stature

This paper is about regional inequality in 20th century Japan. In a context of high-speed economic growth, a rapid regional income convergence occurred in Japan during the second half of the 20th century. The main causes of income convergence were migrations and accumulation of public capital in rural areas, catch-up in production technology, and reduction of the human capital gap.

However, income is only one measure of welfare; other indicators such as life expectancy, nutritional status, health conditions, and average stature of children and adults can be used in order to assess variations in the biological welfare of the Japanese population. As the average stature of a population reflects the cumulated influence of the nutritional status and health conditions during gestation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence, it is one of the best indicators of biological welfare.

In my paper, I will identify the relationship that exists between income and stature; and investigate the causes of the stagnation in the stature of Japanese male and female students (measured at age 5 to 17) since the early 1990s. Preliminary results suggest that (along with changes in other variables) the decline in sleeping time during the last two decades could be responsible for the recent stagnation in the stature of students. Using prefecture-level data, regional per capita income figures, indicators of housing conditions and average stature, the paper will provide a comprehensive view of regional inequality in 20th century Japan.

Jean-Pascal Bassino is Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maison Franco-Japonaise Scholarship) since October 2002. As a member of the Hi-Stat COE program, he studied the historical evolution of Japanese living standards (1720-2005), including international comparisons, and an evaluation of regional inequalities in Japan. Previously he taught economics at Paul Valery University (Montpellier, France). The research presented in this paper is undertaken in cooperation with Dr Noriko Kato, National Institute of Public Health.

The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on Thursday February 9th, 2006 at 6.30 p.m. at the DIJ. Admission is free, space is limited, so please register with Ms. Dinkel at the DIJ.