

DIJ Forum



In co-operation with the German Association of Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF), the German Institute for Japanese Studies will present on

Thursday, 23 March 2006, 18.30 h

Klaus Vollmer
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Images of Japanese society presented in the ‘New Civic Textbook’ by Tsukuru-kai. Solutions for demographic challenges and social change ?

The new Japanese history textbook by the revisionist Tsukuru-kai is at the center of a debate on neo-nationalism and the growing influence of right-wing intellectuals in Japan. This is part of an agenda that calls into question many assumptions on which post-war Japanese society has been built. As Hidetsugu Yagi, president of Tsukuru-kai until recently, pointed out, from the society’s point of view “history textbooks are bad, but civic textbooks used in Japanese middle schools are worse.” So far, the ‘New Civic Textbook’ (*Atarashii kômin kyôkasho*) for middle schools has received less scholarly attention than the notorious history textbook.

This paper will introduce the Civic textbook and its main assumptions about present and future Japanese society. In many ways the textbook tries to explain what makes “a good Japanese citizen” and therefore can serve as a key to understanding revisionist thinking on contemporary Japan. The analysis of texts and illustrations brings to light an image of Japanese society threatened from within and from outside. The paper focuses on how social change is dealt with in the ‘New Civic Textbook’ and what solutions its narrative implies when addressing dramatic demographic challenges, changing family patterns and gender roles.

Klaus Vollmer holds an M.A. and a PhD (1993) in Japanese Studies, Hamburg University. Post-doc research fellow Osaka City University, (prohibitions of killing and meat-eating in pre-modern Japan). Since 1998, chair of Japanese Studies, Japan Center Munich University; Numata-Fellow for studies in Japanese Buddhism in 2002. Fields of research and teaching include cultural and social history of Japan (both pre-modern and modern), focusing on representations and interpretations of Japanese culture. The topic of the presentation at the DIJ derives from a long-standing interest in issues of historical revisionism and historiography in Japan and Germany and its implications for images of and attitudes towards society and its norms. Since 2000, Klaus Vollmer is president of the German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF).

The lecture will be given in English. Admission is free. Please register.
Time: Thursday, 23 March 2006, at 6.30 p.m. DIJ.

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