

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

“Dear Seniors!

Traffic rules apply to you too!”

In this poster by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, TV star Mino Monta (63) admonishes his peers in a slightly condescending manner with the statistic that around 40 per cent of the victims in traffic accidents are elderly people. Moreover, in 80 per cent of the cases, the elderly themselves bear part of the blame, the most frequent cause being crossing the street on a red light. The share of elderly people involved in traffic accidents nationwide has risen from less than 20 per cent in the early 1980s to over 42 per cent in 2005.



2008 marks first year of “Work-Life Balance” era in Japan

Nineteen years after the “1.57 shock” and about a dozen social policy measures later, Japan’s total fertility rate remains far below replacement level. The government’s latest idea is to improve the balancing act between the work and private lives of its citizens and has proclaimed 2008 the “inaugural year of work-life balance.”

Since Japan’s total fertility rate fell to 1.57 in 1989 triggering widespread media interest, the government has implemented numerous measures, laws and policies in an attempt to reverse or at least stop the downward trend. Yet to no avail: In 2007, the total fertility rate was reported to be 1.34.

Ambitious goals...

The Cabinet Office’s most recent objective is to improve the work-life balance. In December 2007, the so-called “Charter for Work-Life Balance” was passed. Goals include an increase in the employment rate of women and the elderly, a reduction in part-time work and a significant reduction in overtime hours. Furthermore, the rate of people taking the annual paid leave to which they are entitled is to be increased from the current level of 47 per cent to 100 per cent.

...deficient implementation

Many obstacles must be overcome before these goals can be attained. In common with many other social policies, government financial backing is insufficient and remains unspecified. Moreover, the charter lacks teeth because penalties for non-compliant companies are missing. Without penalties compliance is likely to remain low. Experience with the 1986 “Equal Employment Opportunity Law” (EEOL) has shown that social policy programmes and laws can change much faster and more easily than social norms.

Masato Shibata, a representative of the Cabinet Office, presented the new work-life balance policies at an international symposium organized by his office in Tokyo on March 13, 2008. In response, someone in the audience enquired if government employees are setting a positive example by implementing work-life balance measures in their own workplace. Mr. Shibata had to confess that overtime is still excessive in the Cabinet Office.

Now online

DIJ extends its services to the Internet. We have compiled a database underlying the *Trilingual Glossary of Demographic Terminology* – the most comprehensive reference work of its kind published as a book by BRILL in 2007 – and made it accessible through our website. While the *Glossary* provides terminological equivalents in Japanese, German and English, accessible from each language, the database also contains explanations, references and links to other materials of potential use in research on population. To try it out, you can look at it right here:
<http://demgloss.dijtokyo.org>

For the book, visit:
<http://www.brill.nl/default.aspx?partid=210&pid=26541>

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No room at the inn: “Care refugees” in Japan

The welfare-political preference for at-home and preventive care turns many elderly people into “care refugees”.



► Which way from here? More and more elderly people in Japan face severe problems finding appropriate institutional care.

The Japanese care system is in a state of crisis. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, over four million people are presently obtaining benefits from the national care insurance implemented in 2000. By the year 2025, it is estimated that this number will have risen to 7.8 million. In order to prevent financial collapse, the state is anxious to keep the costs for institutional care as low as possible. The ones to suffer most from this are the care receivers and their families.

Mr. Saitō (65, pseudonym) starts his day at shortly after five o'clock. The nurse enters the room, which he shares with three other residents of this care facility, and asks them to get ready to get up. Knowing that for the 50 or so residents of this station there are only two workers for the entire morning care, it is a request that Mr. Saitō can hardly refuse. By the time a third staff member arrives shortly before breakfast, all residents must be washed and dressed.

Looking for a home

In reality, Mr. Saitō has been lucky to be admitted to this care facility at all. After a stroke two years ago left him paralysed on one side, the widowed pensioner has been in constant need of support. A lengthy hospital stay was followed by two stopovers in similar homes, until he finally managed to find a vacancy in the present institution in Saitama Prefecture. However, Mr. Saitō knows that his present stay won't be for long either. The type of home he currently resides in is a so-called geriatric health-care facility (*kaigo rōjin hoken shisetsu*). Its official aim is to prepare elderly patients within six months for life back at home. The political logic behind this kind of welfare is that at-home care is much less expensive than institutional care. And as far as the care receivers are concerned, it stands to reason that they too would prefer intensive rehabilitation over merely being looked after.

A care odyssey

All too often, however, the reality stands in marked contrast to official aims. For many elderly people in need of care, the approximately 3,500

rehabilitation homes throughout Japan serve merely as a stopover on a long care odyssey – an odyssey that only in rare cases ends at home. In Mr. Saitō's case, for instance, no kind of rehabilitation treatment – no matter how intensive – will help him to ever move without a wheelchair again. This makes a return to his former house impossible. He will have to hope for a vacancy in a privately run nursing home or a similar institution, provided it is financially within his reach. And Mr. Saitō is not the only one. Since Japanese social policy makers in April 2006 enacted a revision of elderly care focused on at-home and preventive care, vacancies in care institutions have become a scarce commodity. As a consequence, it has been estimated that the number of so-called “care refugees” (*kaigo nanmin*, also cf. p. 4) already exceeds one million people.

Who cares?

The present misery within the care system is aggravated by the poor pay of the institutional caring staff. Their monthly salary of around 200,000 yen (approx. 1,300 euro) is woefully below the Japanese average of around 380,000 yen. This makes it increasingly difficult to find the appropriate personnel for this physically and mentally exhausting work. Many well-qualified employees quit after just a short time, to be replaced by part-time workers without any qualifications. Mr. Saitō is experiencing this first hand every day after breakfast, when the day-shift arrives. In contrast to the night-shift, which is always done by qualified care professionals, a large part of the day-time work is done by part-timers. Hard times for both carers and the cared-for.

Dr. Peter Backhaus, linguist, heads the Humanities section at DIJ. He currently works on the topic of “Communication in a nursing home for the elderly”. His field research provided him with insights into everyday life in Japanese care facilities, including the one described here.
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Compact knowledge about Japan's demographic change

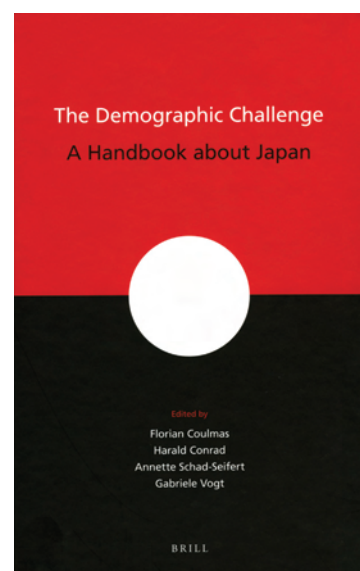
The Demographic Challenge. A Handbook about Japan is the latest – and most voluminous – publication from DIJ. Over more than one thousand pages it offers a comprehensive introduction to Japan's recent demographic changes.

Starting out with chapters on Japan's fundamental demographic development, the subsequent four parts are dedicated to the implications this has for Japan's society, culture, politics, and economics. The book comprises not only studies on the changing structures of family and partnership, but also on ageing and media, education, and tourism. Issues such as reforms in family policy and migration policy are also taken up, as are the latest regu-

lations affecting the nation's labour market and pension system.

The book was launched in Tokyo in May 2008 with a lecture by political scientist John Campbell (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) and an introductory talk by demographer Shigemi Kono (Reitaku University, Kashiwa). Both are among the 63 authors of this handbook.

Florian Coulmas, Harald Conrad, Annette Schad-Seifert and Gabriele Vogt (eds.): *The Demographic Challenge. A Handbook about Japan*. Leiden, Boston: Brill 2008, 1199 pages, €199 / US\$249 (ISBN 978-90-04-15477-3).



◀ **Dr. Gabriele Vogt**, political scientist, is one of the editors of the handbook. She also co-ordinates the project on "Migration and Integration in Japan". vogt@dijtokyo.org

Rapid ageing in Japan's public housing estates

Only a few years ago, Japanese public housing estates (*danchi*) were still hailed as symbols of egalitarian Japanese middle-class society. Recently, however, the media has started to depict them as hyper-aged, impoverished, physically deteriorated and squalid.

According to an article in the December 4, 2007 edition of the weekly news magazine, *SPA!*, many urban housing estates are well on the way to becoming slum areas.

Symbols of new social inequality

Even academic publications are stressing the fact that many estates have become mere reception areas of aged and socially vulnerable citizens. In the public housing estate of Kirigaoka (Kita ward) managed by the Tokyo prefectural government, for instance, the share of people aged 65 and older jumped from 26.6 per cent in 1995 to 46.7 per cent in 2005. At the same time, the official unemployment rate rose from 10.2 to 13.8 per cent (Tokyo ward area: from 4.9 to 5.7 per cent).

Such segregation patterns are familiar in other industrialized countries, but in Japan it contradicts the long-standing self-image of an egalitarian and homogeneous middle-class society.

Japan's "Old Towns"

It should be remembered that many estates were built in one go during the 1960s and 1970s. Almost all resident households back then were young families of the baby-boomer generation. While the children have now moved to other areas, the parent generation has mostly remained and is ageing – as are the buildings. Thus, the extensive New Town areas built at the edges of the major conurbations have recently been nicknamed "Old Towns".

What is more, the construction of numerous attractive high-rise condominiums in city centre areas since the late 1990s has greatly diminished the popularity of suburban housing estates among middle-income households. Therefore, most new residents belong to socially vulnerable groups who cannot afford housing in more central locations.

Amidst this bleak picture there is, however, at least one message of comfort conveyed by *SPA!* magazine to its readers: Since demographic ageing is occurring so rapidly there are no major signs of juvenile delinquency in Japan's *danchi* estates, which is in stark contrast to the situation found in many estates in Western cities.

New downtown housing developments are contributing to the downgrading of suburban estates.

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Forthcoming events

International Symposium: The Silver Market Phenomenon. Business Opportunities and Responsibilities in the Ageing Society

(DIJ Tokyo, X/2/2008, and United Nations University, Tokyo, X/3-4/2008). Co-organizers: DIJ, United Nations University, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Technical University Hamburg-Harburg.

Workshop: Housing the Elderly in Japan. Concepts of Ageing in Place: Rental Housing for the Elderly

(DIJ Tokyo, X/16/2008). Organizer: DIJ (in Japanese).

International Symposium: Fertility and Social Stratification – Germany and Japan in Comparison

(Center for the Advancement of Working Women, Tokyo, XI/6-7/2008). Organizer: DIJ.

Workshop: Corporate Social Responsibility in Japan, Europe and the US

(DIJ Tokyo, XI/12/2008). Co-organizers: DIJ, TÜV Rheinland Japan Ltd.

Recent publications

Patrick Heinrich and Yuko Sugita (eds.):

Japanese as Foreign Language in the Age of Globalization. Munich: Iudicium, 2008.

Documentary film “Pictures at an Election”:

A 78-minute documentary by Axel Klein on Japanese election campaigning. The film (subtitled in English) can be ordered by universities free of charge. For additional information, visit: www.dijtokyo.org

Call for Papers

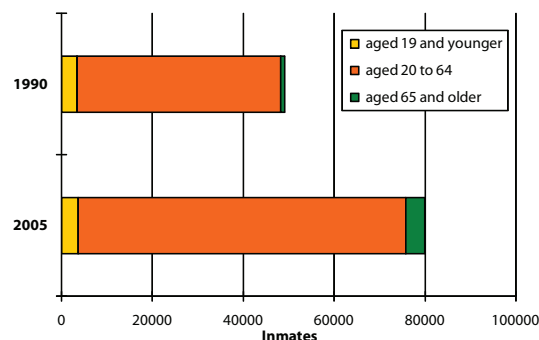
Yearbook 2009:

The topic of *Japanstudien*, Volume 21, which is due for publication in autumn 2009, is “Ageing in Japan”. For additional information, visit: www.dijtokyo.org

Data at a glance

Prisoners are ageing too

The inmates of Japanese reformatory institutions are following the general trend: they are ageing just like the rest of the population. Between 1990 and 2005, the proportion of inmates aged 65 and older rose from 1.6 to 5.2 per cent, while that of young prisoners aged below 20 dropped from 7 to 4.7 per cent. No less remarkable is the fact that, during this same period, the overall number of prisoners increased by about 30,000 persons.



Source: Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku (population census data).

Read for you

Shigemi KONO (2007): *Jinkōgaku e no shōtai. Shōshi kōreika wa doko made kaimei sareta* [How far have low fertility and ageing been explained?]. Tokyo: Chūōkōron Shinsha, 282 pages, ¥860 (ISBN 978-4-12-101910-3). <http://www.chuko.co.jp>

This is a pocketbook that makes for good reading in commuter trains. It is a concise introduction to Japanese demography. The author is the doyen of scientific demography in Japan. Popular presentation, clear writing and the ultimate in reliable information, thus, go hand in hand. Shigemi Kono relates current research. However, he manages to make palatable what might, sometimes, appear to be a chewy diet. This type of book written by such an important author indicates the degree of general interest in questions of ageing and low fertility. Explaining these issues, the general principles of demography in Japan are made clear.

The DIJ Newsletter is published both in German and in English and is also available for download as a full-text version from our website.

For a printed copy (German or English), please contact: dinkel@dijtokyo.org

Catchword

介護難民 (kaigo nanmin)

The term ‘care refugees’ (*kaigo nanmin*) has been in use in Japan for around two years. It designates the growing number of elderly people who, due to chronically scarce space in care facilities, move from one home to another. Their total number is estimated to exceed one million (a little less than one per cent of the total population) and is on the rise. The word *nanmin* has of late also been used to refer to other people in precarious situations, such as *iryō nanmin* and *netto kafe nanmin*.

Therapeutic robot at DIJ

Dr. T. Shibata, the inventor of the Paro service robot, lectured at the “The Silver Market Phenomenon – Business Opportunities in an Ageing Society” workshop. The organizers Dr. Florian Kohlbacher (DIJ) and Pascal Gudorf (DIHK) welcomed more than forty participants.



Picture credits:

Page 1: {poster} photo by Peter Backhaus. Page 2: {elderly lady} by courtesy of Amanda Peskin. Page 3: {book cover} *The Demographic Challenge. A Handbook about Japan* (ISBN 978-90-04-15477-3). Page 4: {figure} Ralph Lützel, {Dr. T. Shibata with Paro} photo by Michael Prieler.

Publisher: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien Tokyo (DIJ).

Person responsible according to the German Press Law: Florian Coulmas.

Editors: Ralph Lützel (editor in chief), Volker Elis, Gabriele Vogt.

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