



Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site



The editorial board of *Contemporary Japan* at the DIJ. Back row (left to right): Patrick Heinrich, Dokkyo University; Nanette Gottlieb, University of Queensland; Ulrike Schaede, University of California, San Diego; Glenn Hook, University of Sheffield; Harald Fuess, University of Heidelberg; John C. Campbell, University of Tokyo. Front row: Sawako Shirahase (away on sabbatical), University of Tokyo; Patricia G. Steinhoff, University of Hawai'i at Manoa; Hilaria Gössmann, University of Trier; Harald Conrad, University of Sheffield; Wolfram Manzenreiter, University of Vienna; Franz Waldenberger, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

Where have all the centenarians gone...

Every year in September on “Respect for the Aged” day, Japan’s Prime Minister congratulates those who celebrate their 100th birthday. At the same time the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare publishes statistics on Japan’s centenarians.

According to the ministry’s statistics, 23,269 persons have turned 100 in 2010. The ministry emphasizes that this figure is based on visits to the seniors and therefore trustworthy. The same publication contains the figure of 44,449 people aged 100 and over. However, this figure has to be taken with a pinch of salt as it is based on the local residential registries, which are known to be somewhat unreliable. This year, at the end of July, a mummified man was found, who, according to the registry, was supposed to be 111 years old, due to the family’s failure to report his deaths to the local authority. As the family had received pension payments fraudulently over a

period of 30 years, this case triggered further investigations in similar cases, which led to a number of “missing” older people. Why the disappearance of many elderly people is never reported and some deaths are concealed requires thorough research.

However, according to the ministry, the statistical life expectancy is not affected by the missing centenarians. Calculations of life expectancy are not based on the residential registries but on the national census, which is conducted every five years. Moreover, the calculation is rather complicated, does not include people over a certain age (98 for men and 103 for women) and the number of missing people is too small in relation to the population as a whole to make a statistical difference. *M.G.*

Workshop with the *CJ* editorial board

A two-hour workshop was held at the German Institute for Japanese Studies on 21 October 2010, which was attended by DIJ research fellows, the institute director, the international editorial board of the newly established institute journal *Contemporary Japan (CJ)*, previously known as *Japanstudien*, and Dr. Anke Beck, the vice president of Walter de Gruyter Publishers.

Workshop participants discussed issues such as content, profile and marketing of the refereed journal. The rapidly changing conditions of academic publishing were also addressed. Board members talked about their experiences from the perspective of their respective disciplines. *S.K.*

Life courses in flux

Japan and Germany are currently undergoing fundamental changes related to population ageing and decline, as well as the ongoing restructuring of the economy and the labour market, among other factors.

Organized by the DIJ in cooperation with the Gender Center of the School of Information of Meiji University, the international conference “Life Courses in Flux: New Opportunities and New Constraints” focused on the question of how these changes affect individual life courses. During the high growth period after World War II, “standardized” life courses of men and women emerged in both countries. Education, employment, family formation, home ownership entry and retirement were expected to occur at a certain age and in a fixed order. Twenty-one speakers from Japan, Germany, the United States and Hong Kong examined whether and to what extent these standard life courses are still valid today and, where they are not, what replaces them. Discussions focused on how the current structural changes affect individual life courses, and in which way individual agency affects the conventional social structure.

Combining two research projects

The focus on the change of life courses provided an opportunity to link the two research projects of the DIJ, namely “Challenges of Demographic Change” and “Happiness in Japan: Continuities and Discontinuities”. Macro-social change and its implications for individual life courses were within the scope of analysis. In order to gain broad insights, the three sessions on central life course pathways (i.e., employment, family and housing) were designed to address change as pertaining to all generations and genders. Methodologically, the conference addressed various approaches applied in research of life courses, life stories and biographies. Moreover, it also uniquely integrated media analysis in the life course perspective. Relating mass media analysis to life course research adds a new dimension to our understanding of the relationship between individual and society.

Forced individualization?

The conference clearly showed that, notwithstanding many differences, Japan and Germany share many aspects of ongoing social change. For example, a number of speakers identified biographic conflicts caused by inherent social contradictions as an important issue. Social norms and institutions often do not keep pace with rapidly changing conditions of societal practice. Put another way, individuals are caught between social conventions and norms on the one hand, and practical constraints on the other; the resulting conflicts between work and family, male and female roles, necessary continuity and the demand for flexibility are difficult to negotiate. Particularly in economically difficult times, the diversification of individual lives does not automatically lead to an increase in life choices; rather, the ongoing change can be understood as forced individualization.

The event was held on 22–23 October 2010 at the Meiji University in Tokyo and was sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and supported by the Meiji University Headquarters of International Collaboration and the Japan Foundation.



Day 1 – Final Discussion: Yukie Mitobe (Meiji University), Jun Imai (Tohoku University), Mary Brinton (Harvard University), Nobuhiko Maeda (Ritsumeikan University), Birgit Apitzsch (University of Duisburg-Essen), Naomi Ushio (Meiji University), Alisa Freedman (University of Oregon).



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The conference was
conceptualized by
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Contemporary Japan launch party

Dr. Anna Prinz, Deputy Chief of Mission (Minister) hosted a launch party at the German Embassy to celebrate the publication of *Contemporary Japan*.

The event, held 21 October 2010, brought out some 120 guests who gathered in the atrium of the embassy for cocktails and to listen to speeches about the aim and contents of the new journal, joining in a toast to its future given by Mr. Masaru Sakato, Acting Executive Director of the Japan Foundation (photograph on the right). *CJ* welcomes and hopes to promote new approaches to the study of Japan. One of the congratulatory addresses by a member of the editorial board, Professor Patricia Steinhoff, succinctly highlighted what distinguishes *Contemporary Japan* from other journals in the field: It strikes a balance between the social sciences and the humanities, promoting discussion across disciplinary boundaries for mutual stimulation and benefit (photograph below).



Other speakers were Professor Yoshimichi Sato, from Tohoku University, Sendai, who addressed the topic of *CJ*'s first issue, social stratification. Employment diversification and increasing income inequality, he explained, bring a reorganization of society in their wake, making stratification a particularly important topic. In the presentation that followed, John McCreery (The Word Works, Ltd.) dealt with changing lifestyles in rapidly ageing postindustrial societies, the main topic of *CJ*'s next volume. Finally, Professor Carolin Funck, from Hiroshima University, took issue with tourism – an important industry, and one that is still growing in Japan's shrinking economy. The multifarious economic, social and cultural aspects of tourism will be discussed in *CJ*'s 2012 topical issue. The programme was concluded by Dr. Anke Beck, the vice president of Walter de Gruyter Publishers, who talked about the changing conditions of scientific publishing in the age of the Internet. *CJ*'s online edition, she pointed out, will make full use of online publishing, offering links to audio and video materials as well as other publications. *F.C.*



► Mr. Masaru Sakato, Acting Executive Director of the Japan Foundation.

The online edition of *Contemporary Japan* is accessible free of charge at:
www.degruyter.de/journals/cj/detail.cfm

Changing human resource policies

On 15 September 2010, the DIJ co-organized a symposium called "Human Resource Policies for the Ageing Workforce: Germany and Japan in Comparison" in Cologne together with the German-Japanese Center Berlin, the German Federal Ministry of Economics, and the Cologne Institute for Economic Research (IW Köln).

The implications of demographic change, including the ageing of society and ageing of employees, have affected labour productivity in diverse ways so that conclusions are hard to draw. What seems evident, however, is that – due to the increasing age of employees – more attention will

have to be paid to further education and training. In addition, an important role will be the reorganization of work procedures and team structures that could be optimized for a new demographic framework.

The discussion among German and Japanese experts at the symposium revealed interesting similarities and differences in solutions and approaches to tackle the issue. The concluding panel discussion emphasized the crucial role of political decisions and the cooperation of social partners, in addition to measures taken at the company level.

◀ **Dr. Florian Kohlbacher**, is head of the DIJ Business and Economics Section and was co-organizer of the symposium.
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Forthcoming events

Workshop:

Aging Society and Innovation

(Shibaura Institute of Technology, Tokyo; XI/17/2010). Co-organizer: DIJ.

Info: <http://office.shibaura-it.ac.jp/mot/sympo.html>

Recent publications

Susanne Klien and Patrick Neveling (eds.):

Tradition within and beyond the Framework of Invention: Case Studies from the Mascarenes and Japan.

Halle/Saale: ZIRS, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg; 2010.

Call for papers

The first issue of *Contemporary Japan*, Vol. 24 (to be published in April 2012) is open to manuscripts from all disciplines as they relate to the wider field of contemporary Japan and its historical roots. Submissions must reach the editors by 31 December 2010.

For the second issue (to be published in October 2012), we invite submissions that reflect critically on the socio-political, cultural, historical and economic dimensions of tourism and travel in Japan (deadline 30 June 2011). We welcome analyses that deal with travel in Japan and outbound tourism, contributions with a theoretical focus as well as more empirically-grounded papers that adopt interdisciplinary approaches.

For more information, visit: www.contemporary-japan.org

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.

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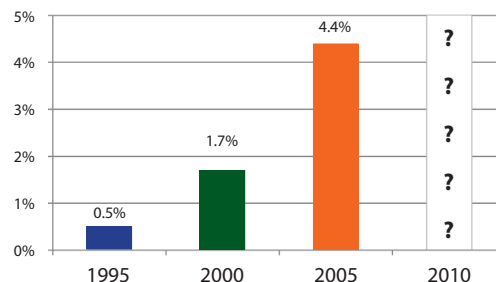
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National census in Japan

Japan's census, which is taken every five years, was carried out at the beginning of October 2010. While the return rate was extremely high in previous decades, it has been declining since 2000, culminating in a non-response rate of 4.4% (13.3% in Tokyo) in 2005. Reasons for this development are said to be a growing concern about (data) privacy protection and the increasing number of single households and multiple dwellings, where access for data collectors is difficult. Therefore, this time, in addition to personal collection of the questionnaire, postal and online (in Tokyo only) data collection have

"Census abstainers"



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2006).
<http://www.stat.go.jp/info/kenkyu/kokusei/houdou2.htm>

been introduced. Whether the return rate has increased this time will become evident in April 2011, when the data will have been processed. *M.G.*

Read for you

Masahiro YAMADA, Dentsu Team Happiness (2009): *Kōfuku no hōteishiki* [An equation of happiness]. Tokyo: Discover 21, 238 pages, 1,000 yen (ISBN978-4-88759-736-5).

In this book about the relationship between happiness and material wealth written for the general public, author Yamada and his team claim that a new value orientation with regard to consumption behaviour has emerged in Japan since the 1990s. New forms of happiness have replaced the old ones based on the consumption of products for a happy family life (e.g., cars and household electronics), and later of luxury brands for acquiring a sense of individual happiness. The authors posit that contemporary consumption in Japan is driven by new formulas of happiness: Immaterial values are now salient, but are still linked to consumption. Examples include pursuing a hobby or some activity with great commitment, making a contribution to society, or finding one's place and being integrated in social relationships. Companies that address and promote these newly emerging needs are likely to lead the economy in the future. *H.T.*

Catchword

草食系男子 (*sōshokukei danshi*)

While Japan is hardly known as a nation of vegetarians, so-called "herbivorous men" are still on the increase. However, this label refers less to the diet of young men in their twenties and thirties, but rather to their outlook on life. Coined by columnist Maki Fukasawa, the term was inspired by young men's reported disinterest in sex, but by no means refers to their love lives only. Having grown up during the recession, the young "grass-eaters" are reluctant spenders who diverge from the consumption patterns traditionally perceived as male, such as drinking alcohol and buying cars. Moreover, herbivores are unwilling to sacrifice themselves for a company that can no longer guarantee lifetime employment. Less assertive and goal-oriented than elder male generations, *sōshokukei danshi* are often described with adjectives usually reserved for characterizing women, such as "gentle-minded" (*yasashii*). What does and does not define masculinity in contemporary Japan appears to be an open question. *K.I.-W.*

Picture credits: Page 1 {editorial board} Claus Harmer. Page 2 {final discussion} Stefan Roesner. Page 3 {Mr. Masaru Sakato} German Embassy Tokyo. Page 3 {presentation slide} Patricia Steinhoff. Page 4 {statistic} Maren Godzik.
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Person responsible according to the German Press Law: Florian Coulmas.

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