

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

Sayonara, nuclear energy?

The largest anti-nuclear demonstration after the reactor catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi plant took place in Tokyo on September 19. According to the event's organizers, approximately 60,000 people participated in the demonstration. Nobel laureate Kenzaburō Ōe, author Keiko Ochai, the journalists Katsuto Uchihashi and Satoshi Kamata, as well as various NGOs and unions had called on the people to take part in the demonstration in downtown Tokyo calling on the government to phase out nuclear energy. C.W.



Energy policy to see major change?

In contrast to the annual coming and going of prime ministers – only recently Yoshihiko Noda succeeded Naoto Kan – Japan's energy policy has traditionally been characterized by its consistency. The government regarded nuclear energy as a safe, cost-effective and environmentally friendly energy source. Accordingly, the share of nuclear energy in the country's energy mix was set to rise from 30% to 50% by 2030. In order to achieve this goal, construction of 14 new nuclear reactors had been planned. As a reaction to the catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, Noda's predecessor Kan chose to alter Japan's energy policy radically by announcing the intention of turning Japan into a "society free from nuclear energy". Kan also successfully demanded the shutdown of the Hamaoka plant (in Shizuoka Prefecture), which is regarded as the nuclear power station most acutely threatened by an earthquake. Moreover, taking a page from the European Union, he introduced stress testing.

Following Kan's resignation in September 2011, the durability of this not entirely uncontroversial change of policy was questioned. Noda too has

supported the long-term reduction of Japan's dependence on nuclear power. He has also proposed to increase the share of renewable energy sources from 9% to 20% by the 2020s. However, unlike Kan, he has not committed to completely phasing out nuclear energy, arguing that Japan would still have to depend on it to some degree until 2030. Moreover, he wants to continue exporting nuclear power plants. To stabilize energy supply in the short and medium term, the new Prime Minister plans to quickly restart presently shutdown reactors once they pass the stress tests. At the same time, Noda has characterized the construction of new reactors as "unrealistic".

Meanwhile, the influential *Science Council of Japan*, a special organization under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister, has put forth proposals for a future energy policy. The council's report outlines six different scenarios, five of which differ only in the length of the remaining running time of nuclear power plants, thereby implying a phase out. Given the short "shelf-life" of prime ministers, it remains to be seen whether, and if so, which proposal will be realized.

New cooperation with the Center for Japanese Studies of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

The German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) has entered into an agreement on academic collaboration with the Center for Japanese Studies (CJS) of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The two institutes are offering each other academic hospitality, pursue research projects of common interest and plan to hold jointly organized workshops.

CJS serves as an organizing unit for more than 30 Japan experts from different disciplines. Among them are numerous internationally well-known professors, including Dr. Patricia Steinhoff, a member of the editorial board of *Contemporary Japan*.

This agreement is the second collaboration the DIJ has concluded with a leading institute of Japanese Studies. An agreement with the White Rose East Asia Centre of the Universities of Leeds/Sheffield has been in place since 2008. C.W.

▲ **Dr. Chris Winkler**, political scientist, heads the DIJ project "How to Make Voters Happy? The Promise of Happiness by Japan's Political Parties between Continuities and Discontinuities". winkler@dijtokyo.org

New research on manga



► Cover of a recent issue of the magazine *Komikku Yuri Hime*.

Manga about love between girls have established themselves as a genre.

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Scientific research on Japanese comics has diversified since its beginnings. However, the genre of *yuri*, a term broadly encompassing stories about love between girls, has so far hardly been noticed. The German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) is supporting research on this genre with one of its Ph.D. scholarships.

Already in the 1970s, *yuri*, meaning “lily”, was used in some subcultures as a reference to love between women. In the 1990s, it became the name of a genre in popular culture, especially among fans of manga and anime. Outside of Japan, the term *shōjo ai* [girls’ love] was established alongside *yuri*, based on the term *shōnen ai* [boys’ love], which in the 1970s was used to signify manga for girls (*shōjo manga*) about love between boys. In Japan, however, the term *shōjo ai* is associated with paedophilia.

Scarce research to date

In Japan as well as overseas, the *yuri* genre has barely been investigated to date. This is surprising given the fact that the genre of *shōnen ai* – that is, stories about love between boys/men – has received much attention over the years. However, research on *yuri* has mostly been limited to studying the contents of one or a few works from a feminist point of view. To date, the genre has been analysed primarily in the context of the discourse on homosexuality. Yet, since the production and reception of these manga were not part of those analyses, the interesting question of whether *yuri* is also understood by publishers and fans as a “lesbian genre”, or whether completely different aspects are relevant in this context, has remained unanswered. While research so far has assumed that *yuri* is generally read by lesbian women, this is not the case in present-day Japan, a discrepancy that speaks to the likelihood of different motivations for reading manga of this genre.

An old genre...

The origins of *yuri* as a genre can be traced back to the 1910s. In popular girls’ magazines such as *Shōjo Gahō* [Girls’ illustrated], narratives about close friendships and romances between girls (also known as *esu bungaku*, from “s” as in “sister”) were published, with Nobuko Yoshiya (1896–1973) being one of the genre’s most famous authors. The first manga dedicated to the topic of “love between girls” were published in the 1970s in mainstream *shōjo* manga magazines. In the past – as now – the majority of their authors and readers are not homosexual.

...with a diverse present

Since the 1970s, the *yuri* genre has further diversified. Today in Japan, there are *yuri* manga for every age group and gender, with works tending to focus on romance primarily targeted at females and works tending to focus on sexual displays primarily targeted at males. With *Komikku Yuri Hime* [Comic Lily Princess] even a magazine exclusively publishing *yuri* manga was able to establish itself in the market. Its readership is distributed across all age groups, around 60% being female and, according to its editor-in-chief, mostly not homosexual. While firmly establishing itself in the Japanese market, the *yuri* genre also crossed Japan’s borders, with the first translated *yuri* manga being published in the United States, France and Germany.

A new research project

Verena Maser’s Ph.D. project analyses the *yuri* genre from the viewpoint of genre theory and examines how it is positioned by different agents. Following Hiroki Azuma, the project addresses the question of whether the concept of “genre” can be applied in the Japanese context. Alongside an analysis of the contents of exemplary manga, a discussion on their production and reception are incorporated for the first time via interviews and examined from an international comparative perspective (Japan, Germany).

DIJ survey on exclusion and happiness after March 11

Following the events of March 11, the DIJ decided to repeat its survey on objective precarity and subjective exclusion conducted in 2009. This time, data was collected especially in the affected prefectures in north-eastern Japan, as well as in and around Tokyo.

The new survey aims to find out whether attitudes have changed in the aftermath of the March 11 catastrophe – for instance in how individual happiness and social cohesion are evaluated, to what extent the government and political institutions are held to be trustworthy, and respondents' readiness to engage in voluntary work. In order to ensure comparability with the previous survey, the questions from the previous survey were retained. However, some items relating directly to the events of March 11 and thereafter were added. Amongst the new items are two open questions asking the respondents to describe what happiness meant to them and whether there was anything that gave them hope.

In order to be able to carry out more in-depth analyses in those areas of Japan most affected by the catastrophe, it was decided to concentrate on two regions instead of conducting a nationwide survey. Five of the 47 prefectures were chosen for data collection: Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, as well as Tokyo and Kanagawa were chosen so as to include one directly and dramatically affected region and one less seriously affected area, but where the catastrophe still had an impact. Thereby, comparisons not only over time, but also between regions become possible.

The survey period ended on October 3, 2011, with 1,632 questionnaires returned, which equates to 48% of the original sample of people asked to participate in the survey. The return rate implies that there is high concern for the topic. Analysis of the data started at the beginning of November.

How happy are parents of young children?

How do the health, personality, employment, material standing and education of mothers and fathers, as well as their partnerships and integration into social networks influence their well-being? A cross-cultural study compares parental well-being in Germany and Japan.

In recent decades, the number of people deciding to become parents has significantly decreased both in Germany and in Japan. In economically difficult times, understanding parental well-being has become highly important – not only for policymakers.

A joint project between the German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo and Benesse Corporation is being conducted in cooperation with Hans Bertram, Humboldt University Berlin. Headed by Barbara Holthus (DIJ) and Hiromi Tanaka-Naji (Meiji University), it provides a systematic analysis of different dimensions of parental well-being including a much needed

perspective on fathers' opinions and their well-being, which so far has been seriously understudied – both in Japan and Germany.

In 2009, a survey was conducted in Germany among 1,000 fathers and 1,000 mothers nationwide from households in which there was at least one child under the age of six. The results of the German survey have just been published in October this year (*Fragt die Eltern!: Ravensburger Elternsurvey: Elterliches Wohlbefinden in Deutschland* [Ask the parents! Ravensburg parental survey: Parental well-being in Germany], edited by Hans Bertram and C. Katharina Spieß; Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 2011). The same survey will be conducted in Japan in January 2012, with first results expected by April 2012.

◀ **Dr. Carola Hommerich**, sociologist, heads the Japanese part of the project "Comparatively Happy" – Objective Precarity and Perception of Social Exclusion in Germany and Japan". hommerich@dijtokyo.org



► The seven dimensions of parental well-being.

◀ **Dr. Barbara Holthus**, sociologist, heads the research project "Parental Well-being: Germany and Japan in Comparison" together with Dr. Hiromi Tanaka-Naji, assistant professor at Meiji University. holthus@dijtokyo.org

Forthcoming events

Workshop:

Care Robotics in the Aging Society: Integrating Users, Developers and Technology

Chair: Florian Kohlbacher;
in cooperation with NRW
Japan K.K.
(DIJ Tokyo, XI/10/2011,
17:00–20:15).

Recent publications

Florian Coulmas and Judith Stalpers:

*Fukushima. Vom Erdbeben
zur atomaren Katastrophe.*
Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011
(192 pages).



Contemporary Japan 23(2)

Lifestyles in Transition – Antecedents and Consequences of Social Change

Issue Editors: Carola Hommerich & Florian Kohlbacher.
Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2011.

Call for Papers

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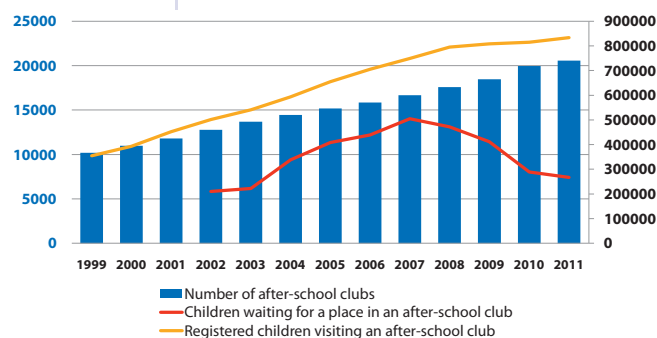
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More after-school clubs for elementary school children

Due to an increase in working parents and single-parent families, Japanese communities are trying to improve after-school care. In May 2011, the number of after-school clubs for the first time exceeded 20,000 institutions, with a total of 833,038 children registered. The number of wait-listed children was reduced for the fourth year in a row and now amounts to 7,408 (this number is exclusive of 12 communities in Iwate and Fukushima where data could not be collected). There is also a trend



towards longer opening hours until
after 6 p.m. *K.I.-W./C.W.*

Source: Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare,
Heisei 23-nen hōkago jūdō kenzen ikusei jigyo
(*hōkago no jūdō kurabu*) *no jissai jōkyō* (as of
May 1, 2011).

Read for you

Josei to Sumai Kenkyūkai (2010):
*Dōjunkai Ōtsuka jōshi apātomento hau-
su ga kataru* [The Dōjunkai Ōtsuka
women's apartment building reports].
Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 290 pages,
2,520 yen (ISBN 978-4-81-070735-9).

The book traces the history of one of the most interesting experiments in Japan's housing history. The book places the house, which was built in 1930 and demolished in 2003, both in the history of the emergence of modern apartment housing in the early 20th century in Japan and in the history of women and housing, as single working women were its target group. The book also links the apartment house to the development of (contemporary) forms of cohousing in present-day Japan. Readers learn that many of the authors were involved in a movement for the preservation of the building. Although this book is not at all of one piece but instead reflects the authors' diverse approaches, it nevertheless encourages readers to further engage with the history of this special apartment house. *M.G.*

Catchword

終活 (shūkatsu)

Shūkatsu, or “job hunting”, refers to an important, rigidly planned phase in the life of young Japanese. Successful *shūkatsu* resembles a rite de passage: taking up a job marks the real beginning of adulthood. The idea that transitions between life stages should be well organized is also reflected in the derivate *konkatsu* [i.e., “the condition-oriented search for a spouse”]. Recently, a homophone of *shūkatsu* has become popular. Written with the characters for ending (*shū*) and activity (*katsu*), it implies a proactive approach to the final stage of life and, importantly, death. Important elements are writing a will, putting one's financial affairs in order, planning one's own burial place, funeral and even deciding upon one's posthumous name. *Shūkatsu* thus extends the idea of self-determination to the very end of life and beyond, possibly making the prospect of death less frightening. However, it remains to be seen whether this variant of *shūkatsu*, too, becomes a mass phenomenon. *K.I.-W.*

Picture credits: Page 1 {demonstration} Maren Godzik. Page 2 {manga magazine cover} by courtesy of Ichijinsha. Page 3 {illustration} Barbara Holthus. Page 4 {statistic} Chris Winkler and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt.

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