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Bonsai Nationalism?

The "Erosion" of the Japanese Language and Japanese Language Policy

by Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner

A couple of years ago a foreigner in Japan making plans to meet with a Japanese friend may have been told to meet at the *poribokkusu* (polibox) in front of the train station. That is easy to remember, the foreigner would think to himself. I'm sure it won't be too difficult to find. Alas, once at the train station, he searches high and low but in vain trying to find it. Why on earth didn't I ask for more details? It sounds as if it might have something to do with furniture polish or some other consumer product that could be advertised in front of the station. When, after much searching, he finally crosses paths with his Japanese friend the latter would be completely surprised at the foreigner's helplessness. Look, here it is: the police station, previously known in Japanese as *kōban*, but, perhaps in the hope of making it easier for the foreigner, the Japanese friend referred to the now forgotten Japanese neologism, the abbreviated form of the English *police box*.

Japanese-speaking foreigners in Japan find themselves today more and more frequently in situations like this: they puzzle over words used in daily life; and only experience and resource-



The inscription on this "polibox" reads: "Osaka Prefecture - Contents: 20 Pieces." © name-chan

fulness point them in the direction of their possible meaning. Mostly these words are English lexemes adapted to the Japanese phonological system or even fabricated in Japan which have replaced the conventional Japanese expressions. Such new terms do not always concern new objects and facts that are introduced in the course of internationalization and globalization. Surely, these too are preferably left in their English form and only transcribed with the Japanese syllabary and adapted to Japanese pronunciation. We can easily become accustomed to *mentaru torēningu* (mental training), *pāsonaru supēsu* (personal space, also in the sense of escape distance), *chirudōrenzu ekisupuresu* (children's express) or *chairudo suponsāshippu* (child sponsorship), because these terms introduce new linguistic referents. But why use *reshipī* (recipe), *baiyā* (buyer), *bijitā* (visitor), *rimitto* (limit) and *risuku* (risk), *māketto* (market) and *sukūru* (school), rather than existing indigenous words? Why is a highway service stop called *haiū oashisu* (highway oasis), with an adjoining *sābisu eria* (service area)? Japanese eyes and ears have obviously become so accustomed to this pompous double Dutch that scarcely a word of protest can be heard. Or perhaps people are simply too busy trying to keep up with all the new lexical monsters that are brought into circulation through official statements and advertisements, by opinion-makers and journalists.

For some time now even bureaucrats and the government have shown a preference for Anglicizing neologisms. While a Japanese word was found for the new care insurance plan – which by the way is a loan translation from German – staff members call themselves *kea herupā* (care helper) and *kea manejā* (care manager). Even *hōmu herupā* (home helpers) are in demand, and mostly those who work on a *boran-*

tia (volunteer) basis. Recently the government has decided to demonstrate civic closeness with local populations throughout the country through a series of discussions held under the heading *taun mītingu* (town meeting). The semi state-run television network NHK tries, at least occasionally, to provide perplexed viewers of news programs with the Japanese meaning of the terms *manē rondaringu* (money laundering) or *hazādo mappu* (hazard map). But we may still ask why they do not use perfectly understandable Japanese expressions, i.e., *shikin senjō* for money laundering and *saigai yosōzu* for catastrophe plan, which are shown in subtitles when the English terms are mentioned.

To be sure, over the last one and half centuries the Japanese language has shown remarkable flexibility and receptiveness toward foreign terms and even adopted new parts of speech (personal pronouns) and grammatical forms. And there can be no doubt that the comprehensive success of Japan's modernization is closely connected to the development of a language that allows the integration of enormous amounts of new knowledge. Thus, the modernization of the Japanese language was a prerequisite for Japan's rise within the international communi-

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ty in the twentieth century. It is rooted in a comprehensive translation effort in which ways were found to express the “other” and the “new” in one’s own language. During the first decades after Japan’s opening to the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a wealth of loan translations was created from existing words with great inventiveness. Over time, however, an increasing number of direct adaptations of foreign lexemes crept into the Japanese lexicon from European languages, mostly from English, French and German. We can study the spheres of influence of the various Western nations quite reliably by tracing the marks they have left on the vocabularies of different fields of specialization. As in other parts of the world, the initially sizable German influence in Japan was soon curtailed. As a result, direct loans from German words are very rare in modern Japanese. Only a few niches remain in specialist fields, such as Alpinism, where we can encounter Germanisms such as *zairu* (Seil/rope), *gerende* (Gelände/terrain) or *arupenshutokku* (Alpenstock/alp walking stick). Doctors file their patients’ records on *karute* (Karte). Moreover, German political movements have left traces in the Japanese language, e.g., *shupurehikōru* (Sprechchor/shouting in chorus) and *geba* (Gewalt/violence). The language of musicians knows the *genepuro*, the Japanese abbreviation for the German term *Generalprobe*, or “final rehearsal,” and a few other expressions that remind us of continuing educational traditions oriented toward Germany.

All of this is a part of the cultural history and natural development of any living language. As such, there is nothing unusual or unsettling about it. However, the most recent developments have clearly taken on a new quality. Not so much because English has now superseded the influence of virtually all other foreign languages. This is a global phenomenon and requires no further explanation. Neither is it only about the vocabulary of specialists in many areas of technology and science, even though we may find it problematic that it has become impossible to think about important subjects in the terms of one’s own language. Indeed, it is about something more serious: English has begun, so to speak, to erode the Japanese language from within. And this is happening without creating a stir and right under the eyes of Japanese speakers who stand by and watch how a rather incomprehensible and aesthetically not very pleasing gibberish is taking over Japanese daily life out of a need to im-

press, or perhaps out of thoughtlessness and pretentiousness. Even the most basic, most “Japanese” words are being replaced by English terms, starting from foodstuffs such as *gurīn tī* and *raisu*. *Take* (bamboo) has become *banbū*, and shoes are no longer *kutsu* but *shūzu* and are available in sizes that range from *sumōru* to *biggu*. Cockroaches are now known as *kokkurōchi*, even though generations of Japanese women used to start screaming in panic only at the glimpse of *gokiburi*. The world famous tradition of the Japanese art of tattooing, otherwise known as *irezumi*, is now disguised in the trendy expression *tatū*, and even the names of such Japan-specific professions as the specialists for fighting scenes in historical films who create and practice the choreographed moves with actors are now being replaced by English designations. What was so far commonly known as a *tateshi* is now referred to as a *faito koriogurafū* (fight choreographer). It is saddening to see how a nation of culture thus cuts the ties to its own traditions.

But the “erosion” of the Japanese language is not limited to the vocabulary. It affects the syntax and the text as a whole. The original part of speech of a neologism is no longer kept in Japanese sentences. For example, “to keep,” a favorite word in current journalism, is commonly used as a noun to which a Japanese auxiliary verb is added, e.g., during tennis broadcasts: *sā-bisu o kīpu suru* – “she keeps her service” is reported on TV when Venus Williams is fortunate enough to score an important point, *rakkī-na pointo* (lucky point) in Japanese. Reports on sport fishing describe the simplest events in the most awkward syntax: *Pojishon* (position) *o chenji* (change) *shinagara faito* (fight) *suru* is, in this garbled Japanese jargon, a way of saying “to change the position to reel in [the fish].” If adapted into German, for instance, this would read “*fightend die position changen*” – which, by the way, appears less strange than one should think to German readers. Young women defend the purchase of expensive handbags with the comment *Tōtaru* (total) *de kangaereba rīzunaburu* (reasonable), “All things considered, a reasonable [purchase].” From a Japanese standpoint, all this cannot be *ichiban besuto*. All the more so since it ignores the fact that “best” is already the highest comparative form and that the preceding Japanese superlative renders this sentence, like so many others, redundant.

So much about the problem. It goes without saying that such modern talking *à la japonaise* is detrimental to intel-

ligibility and excludes a large proportion of the population. In fact, recent discontent for the national language can be gauged by popular movements such as the one for “beautiful Japanese” (cf. DIJ Newsletter 16), or a development that emerged since the middle of 2001 and has been described as a boom of the Japanese language – a wave of popular books that seek to initiate a “rediscovery” of Japanese in daily life through exemplary texts or instructions for the correct use of language. The most popular title among a number of books of this persuasion, which sold more than one and half million copies, is *Koe ni dashite yomitai Nihongo* (Japanese Texts That Are Worth Reading Aloud), written by Saitō Takashi (born 1960), a scholar of education. Similar to this book many other new releases of the past years – with titles such as *Mō ichido yomitai kokugo kyōkasho* (Japanese Textbooks That We Want to Read Again), *Risō no kokugo kyōkasho* (The Ideal Japanese Textbook) or *Utsukushii Nihon no meibun, meishi, meika* (Beautiful Japanese Texts, Poems and Songs) – are organized as collections of exemplary excerpts. Another group of popular books – with titles such as *Jōshiki to shite shitte okitai Nihongo* (Practical Japanese You Should Know), *Nihongo no renshūchō* (Japanese Exercise Book) or *Sono Nihongo, tsūjite imasu ka* (Is Your Japanese Being Understood?) – is aimed at teaching suitable language for daily life, with special emphasis on the correct usage of polite and modest forms of expression. All these books address the problems outlined above at most in an indirect manner. Nonetheless, they seem to be based on a vague awareness of the “erosion of the Japanese language.” Meanwhile, the Japanese publishing boom is sometimes regarded as an expression of language nationalism that is said to be driven by the desire to strengthen the nation through language. In Germany, we would probably have a label such as Bonsai Nationalism at hand in order to stigmatize what the psychiatrist Kayama Rika has described in this context as *Puchi nashonarizumu shōkōgun* (Trivial Nationalism Syndrome) (*puchi* for the French *petit*).

The problem of Anglicism in colloquial speech has now been taken up by a commission consisting of academics, media representatives and translators that was formed by the Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo (Government Institute for the National Language). In April 2003, this commission presented a first list of 59 substitute words under the infelicitous title “Measures for Language Use, Aimed at Making Foreign



Words That Are Difficult to Understand More Easily Comprehensible.” Based on a survey that sought to gauge the comprehensibility of foreign words – for terms such as *kontentsu* (contents), *ferōshippu* (fellowship) and *komittomen-to* (commitment) comprehensibility was 25 percent, i.e., only one out of four Japanese knew their correct meaning – the commission suggested exemplary Japanized equivalents for technical terms as well as colloquial words. Further lists of the same size are expected to be released in July and October. An obvious question is whether a belated linguistic appropriation of well established foreign words can be successful, especially when some of the solutions – for example, *teishaji enjin teishi* (to turn off the engine when stopped) to replace *aidoringu sutoppu* (idling stop) – are hardly aesthetically pleasing. At least, this belated official initiative with its suggestions for language use in official documents offers an opportunity for more purposeful discussions of the problems at hand. At any rate, the simplification of administrative language and the democratization of communication between the state and its citizens are always welcome moves. Moreover, more serious efforts for a nation’s language are not necessarily related to conservatism, language purism or even nationalism. The current situation in Japan is perhaps not so different from the one in Germany where many people distance themselves from their own language. The desire for a cosmopolitan-sounding Globalese has become an obsession in both language communities. In view of this unfortunate development, in which one’s own language is relegated to a provincial dialect, movements aiming to emphasize the significance of the Japanese language for the cultural and social cohesion of the country are indeed legitimate. To be sure, the danger of cultural nationalism cannot be ruled out when a language is conceived not so much as a means of communication than as an instrument for national self-glorification and demarcation against the outside world. Nevertheless, it remains a matter of interest to see how Japan will face the challenge of further developing its language in the twenty-first century. And in this respect, Germany will in all probability continue to be an engaging point of comparison.

This article is partly based on an essay written by the author in Japanese that was published in August 2002 in the monthly journal *Chūō kōron* under the heading “Nihongo no kūdōka o yūryo suru” (The “erosion” of the Japanese language – a wake-up call).

CURRENT RESEARCH

Focus on China – Collective Internationalization Strategies of Japanese and German Production and Technology Companies

At the end of the nineteenth and toward the beginning of the twentieth century, economic activity became increasingly internationalized, and this process accelerated after the end of World War II. The last two decades of the twentieth century in particular witnessed some dramatic turning points and far-reaching changes in the business environment, and these have had a lasting effect on the way business is done.

The establishment of new and dynamic businesses in fast-developing nations such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore together with the increasing number of businesses operating on a global basis from Japan and Germany and other western industrialized countries are examples of the rapid changes that have occurred in the business world in recent years. The collapse of planned economies in Eastern Europe, the economic realignment of the People’s Republic of China and the evolution and consolidation of large unified economic entities such as the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the ASEAN states have all drawn new features on the economic world map.

Key words such as internationalization, globalization and interculturality now characterize this development, which is challenging management anew to maintain or gain competitive advantage. It makes demands on the strategies and organizational concepts of international companies, but also offers numerous opportunities for entrepreneurial creativity.

The increasing speed of globalization will have a lasting effect on the way Japanese and German companies do business. For many years, their national economies were dominated by companies whose imports and exports were scaled to the size of the business. With the liberalization of the global economic order and developments in information technology, businesses are increasingly forced to optimize all

stages of the value-added chain at a global level. China has offered promising opportunities for participation to both German and Japanese businesses since it opened up at the end of the 1970s.

The conditions created by the rapid development of the Chinese economy in the last two decades give rise to questions regarding the most appropriate internationalization strategy in German and Japanese businesses. Under these circumstances, German and Japanese management systems need to decide whether a strategy based on cooperation can enable them to succeed in one of the most difficult markets in Asia. Does a strategy of strategic alliance, value-added partnership, or third-market collaboration offer a promising foundation for business involvement, particularly in the dynamic and difficult markets in China? What are the reasons German and Japanese management give for working together? What are the areas of conflict? And in which way will the collective internationalization strategy be implemented? These are some of the questions which René Haak is focusing on in his research project “Focus on China – Collective Internationalization Strategies of Japanese and German Companies.” The first results of his research were published in the journal *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftlichen Fabrikbetrieb ZWF* and in the book *Japan and China: Cooperation, Competition and Conflict*, edited by Hanns Günther Hilpert and René Haak, and published by Palgrave in 2002.

Relationships and Networks of Social Groups in Japan during the Interwar Period

Sven Saaler has joined a team research project (*kyōdō kenkyū*) of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyōto. The project is organized by Inoki Takenori (Nichibunken and Ōsaka University) and aims to analyze interrelationship and networks of social groups in Japan during the interwar period. The examination of Japanese society as a case study for the formation of a new social order is to be approached by analyzing formal and informal social groups and organizations (e.g., political parties and societies, organizations in the bureaucracy and the military, labor unions and industrial associations, cultural and religious associations), their



relationships to other groups in society, and social networks, which took new forms during this period. The members of this interdisciplinary project come from various fields and are expected to take up a specific social, political or economic actor, analyzing its formation, role in society, connections to other social groups, social networks and social interdependence.

Other members of the project include historians, political scientists, social scientists, economic scientists as well as religious and cultural studies experts. Members include Kitaoka Shin'ichi, Okazaki Teiji (University of Tōkyō), Matsuda Kōichirō (Rikkyō University), Takeuchi Hiroshi, Itō Yukio, Muramatsu Michio (Kyōto University), Tobe Ryōichi (National Defense Academy), Saitō Hiroshi (Hitotsubashi University), Suzuki Sadami, James Baxter, Satō Takumi and Sonoda Hidehiro (Nichibunken). The project, which is scheduled for three years, will be conducted by regular research meetings, the first one was held on May 10–11, 2003, at the Nichibunken in Kyōto.

Within the framework of this research project, Sven Saaler will further develop his research on the political role of the Imperial Japanese Army during the 1920s. The military, above all the Imperial Army, without doubt one of the most influential factors in prewar Japanese politics and society. However, due to the characterization of the 1920s or the Taishō period (1912–1926) as “Taishō democracy,” the role of the army, widely seen as an antidemocratic factor, has not received much attention in research to date. However, from the viewpoint of social networks and interdependence of social groups, the Taishō era can indeed be regarded as the formative period for the army as an independent political actor, the formative period of the “military party” or *gunbu* and of the self-understanding of this “military party” as an independent actor. During the Taishō period we notice not only an increasing presence of the *gunbu* in political institutions, but also a growth in informal contacts of military politicians to other social groups – such as the parties or small political associations, the *seiji kessha*. This kind of social interaction can be seen as clearly distinct from prior forms of the military’s exerting influence in politics. To examine this change and the formation of the “military party” during the Taishō era, primary sources, such as diaries of relevant military politicians, as well as selected sources of political associations shall be analyzed to shed some light on the role of the military in Japanese politics and society in the interwar period.

Gender and Nation in Wartime Japan

With regard to concepts of nation and nationalism, feminist historiography and theory are no longer limited to issues of the exclusion of women from conceptual and factual domains of power and decision-making processes. Rather, the focus has shifted to the ambivalent integration of women into social, cultural and political systems. In his widely received study on “imagined communities,” Anderson referred to the category of gender only with regard to the fraternization of brothers. Meanwhile, feminist scholarship has shown that the discursive imagination and reproduction of a national order and an explicitly binary gender system developed simultaneously and were (are) crucial for their reciprocal representations.

Andrea Germer is currently conducting research within the DIJ project “Assertions of Cultural Uniqueness in Asia” on issues of gender and nation in wartime Japan. Two issues form the center of her analysis. Firstly, an investigation into the collaboration of several feminists of prewar Japan who followed the regime in its imperialist strategies and played an active ideological role therein. The motive for these maternalist as well as egalitarian feminists, some who appealed to and others who were critical of the state in prewar times, seems to have been ultimately the expectation of being granted full citizenship, i.e., their share in social and political power, within the nation-state. Preliminary results of this issue have been presented at the third symposium on “Assertions of Cultural Uniqueness in Asia” (“Asiatische Selbstbehauptungsdiskurse”) that was held in Erlangen, Germany, in December 2002 (cf. Newsletter 18).

Secondly, Germer investigates the particular ways of integration of women and men into the national project within the context of international competition and friction, focusing on the variety of gender models offered to them for identification. The magazine *Nippon fujin* (The Japanese Woman, 1942–1945), the official organ of wartime Japan’s streamlined women’s organization Dai Nippon Fujinkai, serves as primary material for the analysis of coherence and ambivalence of such models of identification offered by the nation-state. To date, surprisingly little attention, both in Japanese as well as international scholarship, has been given to this historical source material, abundant in text and imagery. A first glance of the magazine reveals that



The March, April and May 1943 issues of *Nippon fujin*



The November 1943 issue of Nippon fujin with the emblem of Dai Nippon Fujinkai (a red sun on a white field shaped like the character for "woman")

within the certainly male-dominated process of nation building, women and gendered representations in general form an essential element in structuring the inside as well as demarcating the outside in nationalist discourse. A detailed analysis of this source shall contribute to the clarification of discursive relationships with regard to gender, nation and war.

DIJ EVENTS

Symposium

The Future of Corporate Pensions in the United States and Japan
(Tōkyō, April 15, 2003)

The Japanese pension market is one of the largest in the world, second only to that of the United States. However, with the rapid aging of the Japanese population, securing old-age provisions has become increasingly difficult. Public pension benefits have been curtailed substantially in recent years, whereas new corporate pension legislation aims to increase the role of employment-based pensions within a new public-private pension mix. The most recent regulations regarding the Japanese corporate pension market have been influenced strongly by the U.S. experience, and there are hopes that the Japanese pension market might achieve results similar to those experienced by the U.S. market since the mid-1970s. However, prospects for future returns seem less promising given the current slowdown of world stock markets and the prevailing uncertainty regarding the extent of financial scandals that have occurred in the United States (e.g., Enron, WorldCom) and Europe (e.g., Ahold). These concerns have observers wondering whether and how corporate pension plans can adapt to these challenges, so that they can effectively manage their



The American-Japanese pensions symposium was chaired by Harald Conrad, DIJ.

funds in the best interest of their sponsors.

By comparing recent developments in regulations and practices in the U.S. and Japan, this symposium, jointly organized by Harald Conrad (DIJ), Takayama Noriyuki (Hitotsubashi University), Andrew Horvat (Asia Foundation) and Arimori Miki (Nikko Financial Intelligence), addressed these issues from a comparative perspective. The three speakers William Dale Crist (Former President of the Board of Administration, California Public Employees' Retirement System), Yano Tomomi (Executive Managing Director, Japanese Pension Fund Association) and Franck Wiebe (Chief Economist, The Asia Foundation) together with the commentator Kubo Tomoyuki (Chief Researcher, Pension Research Institute, The Sumitomo Trust & Banking Company) and the chair, Harald Conrad (DIJ), discussed various questions such as the



The corporate pensions symposium attracted more than two hundred participants.





At the symposium "The Future of Corporate Pensions"; left to right: Conrad, Wiebe, Crist, Yano, Kubo

role of pension funds in corporate governance, investment strategies to overcome the current slump in stock markets and the likely effects of demographic changes on prefunded pension plans. The role of pension funds in corporate governance in particular became a topic of the following lively debate about the necessity, possibility and shortcomings of more shareholder-value-oriented investments of pension funds in Japan. The timeliness of the issues discussed and the reputation of the speakers were a major factor in attracting more than two hundred participants to this symposium. For further details, please contact Harald Conrad at the DIJ (conrad@dijtokyo.org).

Symposium

Germany and Japan – With Reforms to New Dynamics
(Düsseldorf, April 8, 2003)

For almost a decade both Japan and Germany have been experiencing persistent low economic growth rates, and recent prognoses indicate that both countries are unlikely to fare better this year. The diagnosis is clear: Japan and Germany are stuck in their impetus for reform. What reforms are necessary to return to a stable growth path? This question was the focal point of a joint symposium of the DIJ and the Cologne Institute for Business Research (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln, IW), which was held in memory of Horst Waesche, a long-time member of the

board of Hoechst and of Aventis and a former member of the advisory board of the DIJ, who died suddenly in March last year. This symposium, organized by Harald Conrad (DIJ) and Ralf Kroker (IW), was generously supported by the Asia-Pacific Committee of German Business (APA), the Aventis Foundation and the IKB Deutsche Industriebank. Following the welcoming address given by Stefan Ortseifen, member of the board of the IKB Deutsche Industriebank, Martin Frühauf, member of the supervisory board of Aventis, Strasbourg, honored Horst Waesche's professional achievements and his engagement for closer Germany-Japan business relations. In his keynote speech, Gerhard Fels, director of the Cologne Institute for Business Research (IW), stressed the need for Germany and Japan to implement structural reforms to regain international competitiveness. These issues were examined more closely in four panels: mergers and acquisitions (Andreas Moerke, DIJ, and Klaus-Werner Schatz, IW), social security (Harald Conrad, DIJ, and Jochen Pimpertz, IW), labor market policy (Franz Waldenberger, University of Munich, and Holger Schäfer, IW) and business financing (Werner Pascha, University of Duisburg-Essen, and Karl Lichtblau, IW).

This symposium, which was attended by eighty participants, presented a well-rounded picture of the rather diverse state of structural reforms in both countries. Whereas Japan seems to be behind in fields like mergers and acquisitions, reforms of social security and the labor market have been implemented with more decisiveness than in Germany. In business financing the situation in Japan is hard to compare be-

cause current business is heavily overshadowed by the credit crunch and the precarious financial health of major private banks.

The publication of the papers of this symposium is planned for autumn this year. For further information, please contact Harald Conrad at the DIJ (conrad@dijtokyo.org).

Workshop

Changes in Market and Industry Structures in Japan – Opportunities for the German Economy

(Dresden, April 1, 2003)

The banking crisis, growing unemployment, and corporate bankruptcies dominate news headlines about Japan. People seem to have forgotten that Japan – still the biggest economy in Asia – also offers many business opportunities. These opportunities were the topic of a joint workshop between the DIJ, the Saxony Economic Development Corporation and the German-Japanese Industrial Cooperation Committee (DJW). The workshop, entitled "Changes in Market and Industry Structures in Japan – Opportunities for the German Economy" was held at the "Businesspark Dresden" on April 1, 2003. Saxony's state minister of economic affairs and labor was a patron of the workshop, while JETRO kindly sponsored the event attended by eighty people from the industry as well as scientific and other organizations.

Iwasaki Masahiro, secretary general of JETRO Berlin, gave the opening speech and spoke on "Investment in Japan – New Opportunities for German Corporations." He was followed by Sara Schröer from the DJW who spoke on the various approaches toward "Building Business Relations with Japanese Corporations" and entering a market that is often seen as extremely difficult. Hints on the dos and don'ts of such approaches were then provided by Harald Dolles (DIJ) in his paper "Successes and Failures in Working with Japanese Firms."

Part two focused on the development of certain industries in Japan and the opportunities to enter these markets. The practitioner's view was shown by Dietrich Wetzel, owner of "Dietrich Wetzel Lace and Curtains from Plauen," who described his own firm's entry into the Japanese market. Harald Conrad (DIJ) gave a detailed account of which potential German companies have in the Japanese health

care and medical technology field. Finally, Andreas Moerke (co-organizer from the DIJ) shed some light on the restructuring processes in the Japanese automotive supplier system.

The talks were followed by lively discussions which continued until the evening reception. Thus, it seems fair to say that in the German state of Saxony there is a vivid interest in the Japanese economy.

REPORTS ON CONFERENCES

2003 Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting

(New York, March 27–30, 2003)

This year's annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies was held over four days from March 27 to March 30 in New York. The venue for the meeting was the Hilton New York and participants were provided with plenty of opportunity to meet people, exchange opinions and, of course, to discuss one's own research with colleagues working in the same field. Panels and lectures dealt with diverse topics such as culture, the economy, history and various religions of Asian regions. It was thought that the number of participants may well have exceeded the two-thousand mark.

The DIJ was represented by Andreas Moerke who presented a paper on changes in board structures in Japanese stock corporations and their effect on the efficiency of those corporations. This lecture was part of the panel "Global Pressure for a Changing Japanese Political Economy," organized by Ulrike Schaede (University of California, San Diego) – who spoke on global pressure and the situation of small firms in Japan. Verena Blechinger (formerly DIJ, now Harvard University) spoke about bribery and OECD standards on bribery in Japan, while Miranda Schreurs (University of Maryland) delivered a speech about the needs for and the use of ISO 14000 family norms in Japan. In his role as discussant, T. J. Pempel (University of California, Berkeley) summarized results and led the lively discussions that followed.

BOOK REVIEW

Arne Holzhausen (ed.): *Can Japan Globalize? Studies on Japan's Changing Political Economy and the Process of Globalization in Honour of Sung-Jo Park*. Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 2001, 468 pp. (ISBN 3-7908-1381-8)

As can be seen from the title, this volume is a *Festschrift*, a book written by colleagues and students to honor an academic. This *Festschrift* was compiled on the occasion of Sung-Jo Park's sixty-fifth birthday, a long-time professor for the Japanese economy at the Free University of Berlin. Thirty-two colleagues from the academic field, previous students and doctoral students wrote contributions for this volume that aims to show the recent development of Japan's politics and economy and to investigate how these developments interfere with other societies and economic systems. The editor decided to divide the contributions into two large parts named "The Internal Preparations" and "The External Preparations." They are complemented by an introduction, an epilogue and an appendix, all containing further contributions.

Malcolm Trever's introduction opened the field for the contributions in part one, which question whether (and to what degree) the Japanese economy is moving toward market principles, whether Japanese companies are opening their structures and whether society is becoming more pluralistic. Trever outlines the differences between the Japanese and the Anglo-Saxon system, and with new Large Scale Store Law (*daitenhō*) he shows – albeit somehow skeptically – examples of change.

Kikkawa Takeo wrote the first contribution of an analysis of the Japanese economy. By investigating case studies of deregulation in the telecommunication, power supply and petrochemical industries, he presents the historical background of the processes of change. Sam Dzever is interested in the analysis of buyer-seller interactions between corporations. His findings are quite relevant for those working in the field because he demonstrates that contract terms and delivery schedule are the most important for the purchasing side, while supply contract term and after sales services ranked highest for the supplier price. The editor's contribution focuses on his long-term research field: supplier relations in the automotive industry. According to Holzhausen, enterprises have different

opportunities to participate in the globalization process. Increasing pressure to lower production costs is accompanied by increasing involvement of foreign suppliers. Nevertheless, corporations that manage to cope with the cost pressure and maintain a high level of technical development may have even more opportunities than before. Kurt Görger's investigation into Japan's financial sector and financial reforms tackles one of the most severe problems confronting the Japanese economy. Görger points to the relation of the asset and real estate bubble at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, which had an enormous impact on the bad debts that Japan's banks have been fighting against for a number of years now. Moreover, Görger outlines where the financial sector is undergoing changes, and concludes: "In the long run, we can expect that Japan, too, will adopt the Anglo-Saxon, capital market driven financial models" (p. 81). The latest examination of macroeconomic phenomena in this field was carried out by Nitta Michio, who focused on modes of employment. Employment is another field where changes cannot be overlooked. Although the share of regular employees remains quite stable, the percentage of non-regularly employed persons like part-timers and *arubaito* is increasing.

In the next part, five contributions deal with microeconomic trends. Shibagaki Kazuo explains one of the core demands raised by the Japan Corporate Governance Forum, namely the separation of management and control. In the meantime, since the publication of the volume, Japanese law makers have taken up this demand. The latest revision of the commercial code (*shōhō*) provides stock corporations an opportunity to choose between the traditional and a board system that permits a separation. Muramatsu Shinobu investigates conditions for mergers and acquisitions. According to his findings, foreign direct investment (and out-in M&A) is increasing. Even this is thought to have an impact on Japanese firms, namely: "the bold M&A strategies that many foreign companies have sought in Japan made executives of Japanese firms more willing to make similar moves" (p. 118). Koike Kazuo's contribution compares the human resource development of professional workers in two British and one Japanese companies. The conclusion that the Japanese firm – just as the British ones – prefers employees with a "broad single function type of carrier" (p. 123) seems to oppose common wisdom and requires further examples of the same



kind. John *Kidd's* contribution on organizational learning refers to some broad-range areas (like "oriental cultures" based on the Koran, ancient China, and Japan) and different concepts of learning (distinguishing between "western" and "eastern" concepts, the first referring to Argyris and Schoen and others, the latter mainly influenced by Nonaka and Takeuchi). The link to the overall topic of the book – Japan's globalization – seems to be rather weak here. The opposite holds true for Enno *Berndt* and André *Metzner's* contribution. First, it is well written and reads like a good essay. Second, the contribution gives an in-depth overview of the Japanese car industry in the 1990s. From profound comments on the description of product development at Toyota, the reader gets at least as much information on organizational learning in a globally operating Japanese firm as from the previous contribution.

The third part focuses on the issue of increasing pluralism in Japanese society and examines elections, gender issues and juvenile delinquency. J. *Stockwin* seeks to prove that if increasing pluralism is to be understood as an increase in the number of political parties and programs, a pluralizing process is indeed taking place in Japanese society. Anette *Schad-Seifert* in her analysis of the discourse on "masculinity" points out that the understanding of the male role which was developed after World War II is becoming less dominant today. Ilse *Lenz* focuses on the connection between technology and gender. According to her, the concept of gender is on the one hand "used to create and legitimise differences in the approach to technology" (p. 213), thus resulting in a different access to the labor market for men and women. On the other hand, new industries like the software industries are creating new career opportunities for women. Gesine *Foljanty-Jost's* contribution analyzes juvenile delinquency and how it is being combated, and how Japan is quickly catching up – much to Japan's dismay – to its western counterparts (with the U.S. named as a prominent example). Foljanty-Jost shows that starting from the mid-1990s, various forms of juvenile delinquency have been taking place concurrently. As countermeasures, the Monbushō sought to combine "soft factors" (education) and "hard factors" (strengthening control and monitoring). By looking at the reality in Japan today, one has to ask oneself how successful these attempts were.

"The External Preparations" is the title of the second part of this volume,

which begins with some analyses of Japan's foreign relations and addresses questions whether Japan would aim for leadership in Asia or in a more global context. Peter *Duus's* article (a very stringently written and informative contribution) on "New Asianism" reminds us that "Asia" is first a western construct, and then analyzes Pan-Asianism after the war as well as New Asianism in present-day public opinion. He writes: "If there was a mainstream view on Japan's position in the international order, it was that Japan could belong to both *Asia* and the *West* – and that in fact it really did" (p. 255). Reinhard *Drifte* investigates Japan's diplomatic ties with central Asian countries in the former Soviet Union. Japan's ODA donations to that region are – interestingly enough – less decided by government programs but more by the interests of high-ranking Japanese bureaucrats. Paul *Kevenhörster* who is also investigating ODA presents a comparison between Japan and other nations. The contribution of András *Hernádi* is the final paper in this section and gives an overview of Japan's image of Europe. It is still said that the cornerstone of Japan's foreign relations are its ties to the U.S., and that relations with Europe can and should be intensified.

Global markets as the new paradigm is the topic of the fifth part of that volume. It has to be mentioned that "market" is understood here in a very broad sense. In the discourse on globalization, Galen *Amstutz* points out that while some topics dominate (especially the superiority of mixed economies, universalistic corporate ethics or environmental issues), others are difficult to find in popular discussions, i.e., different views on the necessity and effects of consumption, psychological factors that affect daily life and the struggle for (social and material) status as a driving force behind human behavior. According to *Amstutz*, globalization is "for two thirds of the globe [...] not primarily about human happiness and well-being at all. It is only about a regime of accelerated growth" (p. 315). Globalization in the field of marketing is tackled by Sierk A. *Horn*. His convincing contribution says that corporations as well as consumer (preferences) are globalizing. Therefore, a successfully operating company must build up a global brand identity. For a better understanding, Horn presents his investigation of marketing strategies in Japanese and German firms by demonstrating how different strategies can be despite sharing the same goal. Carsten *Fussan* has a closer look at strategies to maintain competitiveness

and defines "adaptation management" as a key factor. Although all companies face this need, there is no universal "best solution" in adaptation management because corporations act in different environments. The last contribution in this section is by Karin *Funke* who gives an overview of Daimler-Chrysler's strategy toward Asia.

The sixth part questions the causes and effects of globalization processes with "pioneers" and "followers." Joop A. *Stam* for instance investigates how consensus is reached in different cultures. His comparison of Japanese and Dutch enterprises led him to the conclusion that both pay a great deal of attention to a consensual atmosphere, but in Dutch firms, after intense discussions, people try to reach a consensus and sometimes end with a majority vote, which is still acceptable to them. In contrast, managers of Japanese firms pay great attention to the continuous flow of information and stress the common responsibility of all persons involved. Ulrich *Jürgens's* analysis of the production system in the German automobile industry examines an example of globalization led by Japan. Although heavily influenced by Japanese concepts, German car makers did not copy them but adopted the concepts according to their needs. For example, *Jürgens* reveals that in the supplier relationship German car supply manufacturers have greater responsibilities than their Japanese counterparts. *Jürgens* also states that Japanese concept have been tremendously helpful for the German automotive industry in their attempts to catch up. Globalization does not only mean the spread of concepts, but also the construction of international production networks. This point is investigated by *Takahashi Yoshiaki*, who pays special attention to the risks associated with currency exchanges and suggests the creation of a Yen Block in South East Asia. With an even broader focus, i.e., Asia, Kerstin *Teicher* deals with the utilization of the internet and e-commerce in her analysis. She points out that Japan is one of the most important markets for mobile communication, which is illustrated by a case study on i-mode. Dieter *Beschoner* and Marc-Oliver *Thurner* wrote the last contribution in this section, investigating deregulation and strategies of multinational corporations in China. We can assume that Japan's huge investment in China was the reason why this contribution was included in an otherwise Japan-centered book.

John *Galtung's* contribution serves as an "epilogue" and he asks: "Is there a Japanese Economic Crisis?" The author points out quite frankly that in his



opinion the crisis in Japan is on a very distinct level, and is far removed from the poverty of developing countries. "A real problem for Japan is not an economic crisis but an educational crisis: students passing through universities almost untouched by deep knowledge" (p. 423). Indeed, a drastic judgment – but possibly a correct one. The "appendices" contain three more contributions with various topics, thus showing the broad range of Sung-Jo Park's research interests. Ulrich *Albrecht* writes about political and cultural aspects of German reunification, Gerhard *Ackermann* and Wolfgang *Jahnke* address changes in the university system in Germany. Wolfgang *Seifert's* article (the only one in German, by the way) is an investigation into the terms *Betrieb* (firm) and *Gewerkschaft* (trade union) and their different meanings in various environments.

It is difficult to summarize and evaluate this volume. The great variety of Sung-Jo Park's research interests is echoed in a very broad range of topics covered in this volume. This does not necessarily translate into enjoyable reading, especially since the academic level and demands of the several contributions tend to vary. The variety of topics, on the other hand, is the reason why this book should be placed on the shelves of academic libraries in the field of Japanese Studies. Finally, it must be stated that only a few contributions really aim to answer the main question – "Can Japan Globalize?" – which, on second thought, turns out to be wise move indeed. It is a far too complicated question to be answered with a single "yes" or "no."

(Andreas Moerke)

OTHER MATTERS/ OUTLOOK

Workshop

The Future of the Japanese Economy. Can Japan Compete?

(Japanese-German Center Berlin (JGCB), September 17, 2003)

This workshop, jointly organized by the DIJ and the JGCB and embedded into the "Asia Pacific Weeks" in Berlin, will focus on current economic issues as well as on issues related to the political economy of present-day Japan. Papers will refer to reforms of the Koizumi government, and will also provide

examples of how these reforms can influence certain industries.

For further information, please contact Andreas Moerke (moerke@di-jtokyo.org).

DIJ Conference

Paradigm Change through New Technologies? The Impact of EDI on Economic Processes in Japan, Germany and the U.S.A.

(Goethe-Institut Tōkyō, October 24–25, 2003)

This conference, jointly organized by Andreas Moerke (DIJ) and Cornelia Storz (University of Marburg), will focus on issues such as how information and communication technologies are the driving forces behind growth and innovation, which potential they offer for strengthening long-term competitiveness of industries and businesses, and where the difficulties in these processes are. These issues are especially important for Japan since it is widely believed that, based on the premise that the future of economies lies in the utilization of information and communication technologies, the Japanese economy, with its vertical industrial structure and lack of modularization, is not suited to these new opportunities. Special attention will be focused on EDI (*electronic data interchange*), because this technology in particular has been said to exert tremendous influence on changing economic processes.

Accordingly, this conference is structured into three sections. The first panel will deal with regulation of EDI and the political implications of this process as well as the institutional framework. Special attention will be paid to the institutional interdependence of the EDI structure and the structure of its institutional surrounding, e.g., the manner in which standards and regulations are formulated or an industry is structured. The second panel will seek to analyze "internal" institutional interdependence, i.e., how new technology shapes processes and structures in businesses (and vice versa). The third panel aims to analyze the long-term potential of EDI, beyond rationalization and the acceleration of processes.

A comparison between the U.S., Germany and Japan is critical to understanding the situation and analyzing them correctly. The U.S. is often equated as a leading country of new technologies; Germany and Japan are thought

to be behind. A critical analysis can differentiate this opinion which appears to be based on generalized facts and incomplete data. Moreover by using a comparative study, learning opportunities can be created. For example, which framework conditions should be established, where are the potentials beyond rationalization, and which institutional elements can we learn from each other?

The conference is supported by the Japan Foundation. Further details as well as the conference program will be announced on the DIJ homepage. Inquiries should be sent to Andreas Moerke (moerke@di-jtokyo.org).

Call for Papers

Japanstudien: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Instituts für Japanstudien

Japanstudien is a peer-review journal published once a year by the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tōkyō. This journal includes articles on the culture, economy, society and politics of modern Japan as well as Germany-Japan relations. Contributions on these topics are welcome from scholars in any academic discipline. Most issues of *Japanstudien* focus on a particular topic. The subject of volume 16, which is expected to be published by autumn 2004, is:

"Group" as a Construction Gender, Ethnicity and Social Groups in Japan

"The group" has been regarded as the central socioeconomic form of organization in Japan. Equally, the internal structure and the organization of groups were seen as fundamental for Japanese society at large, which in turn was thought to be socially and culturally homogeneous. A prominent example for this scheme of thought is the discourse called *Nihonjinron*, in which the assumption of a unified and specifically Japanese identity forms the implicit basis of all questions. As a reaction to this discourse, a number of publications appeared that – by focusing on ambivalences and deviations, namely minorities and their positions in Japanese society – relativize this imagined homogeneity. In social as well as in academic discourses on difference, unity and divergence, groups are often understood as rather fixed social, ethnic, sexual and other players,



whereas processes and patterns of their formation and their interdependence are not viewed with the same caution.

In contrast, we see social groups as historically contingent constructions which emerge and can exist only in relation to and in interaction with other imagined groups and whose relations with each other have to be renegotiated steadily. It is our understanding that groups create their self-image by constructing a dichotomous "other" and constitute themselves by differentiation along indicators and categories such as sex/gender, ethnicity/culture or social groups/lifestyles.

The main topic of this volume deals with the following questions: What are the modes and mechanisms (processes, channels, technologies, strategies) of group formation practiced in Japan? How – through which verbal and non-verbal communicative and habitual modes, through which processes of economic distribution and political negotiation – are these specific relations formed? In what ways are different levels of access to resources and to means of production, to the power of definition and of stigmatization created, secured or questioned? When answering these questions, it is of special interest to investigate how two or more groups interact with and depend upon each other, to analyze the patterns of interdependence as well as the frictions that arise from the unequal balance of power.

Manuscripts for this volume should deal with marginalized social groups (with regard to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, social status or lifestyle) and/or with groups of the "mainstream" as long as they have a focus on the interdependence of these groups and the processes of constructing "the other." We expect that the contributions aim not only to describe but also to analyze theoretically the reciprocity of inter- and intragroup *dynamic* processes.

Manuscripts should not exceed 10,000 words (about 20 pages). **Abstracts** (of about 400 words) together with a short bio of the author are to be submitted electronically to the institute by **August 1, 2003** (editors: Andrea Germer and Andreas Moerke). Accepted **manuscripts** should arrive by **December 15, 2003**. Articles previously published or submitted for publication cannot be accepted. Book reviews related to this year's subject are also welcome.

Details of previous issues as well as contents and articles of *Japanstudien* can be found on our homepage (<http://www.dijtokyo.org>). For further information on volume 16, please contact

Andrea Germer (germer@dijtokyo.org) or Andreas Moerke (moerke@dijtokyo.org).

Dissertation Fellows

Andreas Nabor, Economics, Japanese Studies, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hamburg and the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWA): "The International Competitiveness of the Japanese Capital Market" (April–July 2003).

Michaela Oberwinkler, Japanese and Chinese Studies, Linguistics, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tübingen: "Japanese Youth Language on the Internet" (April 2003–July 2003).

Monika Hinkel, Japanese Studies, Oriental Art History, Political Science, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Bonn: "The Historical Prints of the woodblock Print Artist Toyohara Kunicchika" (1835–1900) (May 2003–April 2004).

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