

All the Wrong Signs

By Isa Dücke and Natascha Thoma

"But bicycles are allowed to go when it's red!", the white haired lady calls from her scooter. She sounds almost angry. We ignore her shooping gesture and send her a friendly smile.

In Tokyo, bicycles are also allowed on the footpath, or on the right-hand side of the road, or to drive without lights at night. That, at least, is the practiced norm.



Picture by Isa Dücke

The legal norm looks different. Naturally, Japan also has a road traffic act (*dōro kōtsūhō*), and it isn't even all that different from the one in Germany. It stipulates that traffic lights apply to all road users (§7), that all vehicles including bikes must drive on the left-hand side of the road (§18), and that stopping on an intersection or a pedestrian crossing and within 5 meters of one are forbidden (§44).

An offence against these rules results in harsh punishments – at least in theory, that is. Ignoring a red traffic light can cost a cyclist 50 000 Yen or lead to 3 months imprisonment at most. Motorists, too, can be made to pay large sums for an offence against traffic rules: The highest possible drink-driving charge, for example, has just recently been upped to 500 000 Yen. And the road traffic act even applies to taxi drivers.

But before 8 p.m., hardly a taxi

driver turns on his lights. Traffic signs, pedestrian crossings, and parking prohibitions are often ignored by everyone. But, if you look closely enough, there is a system in what seems like total inordinateness: unwritten norms that markedly diverge from the written laws.

Right of Way for Mothers

Some offences against traffic rules are so common that they've become convention. If nearly everyone thinks "I might not make it across the lights because of that lame duck," then a light that has turned red within the last 3 seconds is virtually still green (in Germany the fine increases after a second). Accordingly, the start of the green phase is also delayed – an important measure of security especially for pedestrians.

Social factors play an important

role in regard to road conduct. And so taxi drivers have their own special rules: They're allowed to roar over an intersection just a little bit later than others, can take their liberty with right of way, and are allowed to change lanes abruptly and without signaling. Most taxi drivers are elderly gentlemen in ill-fitting suits. Their average age lies at above 60 years. The generation, then, on whose back Japan managed to become the economic number one. An inadequate pension system forces them to drive taxis today. "Somehow you could feel sorry for them!" A case of a collective bad conscience?

Mothers with heavily laden bicycles, 2 children plus groceries and an umbrella balancing on the wrong side of the road without their lights on. Ditto. They're the hope for the future. Those children are important (for our pensions, so that we don't end as taxi drivers). We're grateful to the mother. But drive carefully now.

This discrepancy between theory and practice, between written traffic laws and practical conduct on the streets can be found not only among road users, but also within the police force – who should, after all, watch over the rules being followed.

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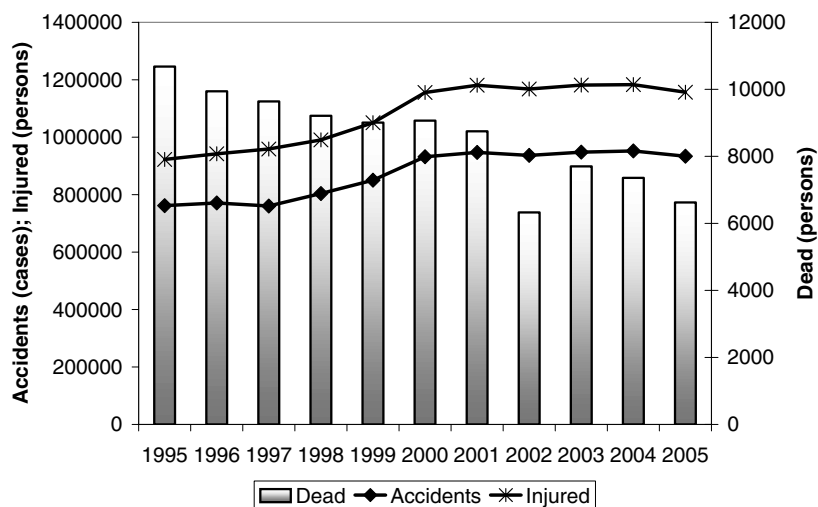
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German Institute for Japanese Studies
Managing editor: Harald Dolles
3-3-6 Kudan-Minami
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0074, Japan
Tel.: +81-3-3222-5077
Fax: +81-3-3222-5420
E-mail: dijtokyo@dijtokyo.org
Homepage: <http://www.dijtokyo.org>



	Killed per 100,000 of population	Accidents involving injury per million passengerkilometers
Austria	12	5.26
Denmark	8	0.09
Germany	8	0.39
Greece	19	0.53
Japan	7	0.77
Norway	6	0.13
United Kingdom	6	0.30
United States	15	0.29

Road accidents and victims in selected OECD countries.
Source: OECD 2005, <http://www.oecd.org>



Road accidents and victims in Japan, 1995–2005.
Source: National Police Agency, <http://www.npa.go.jp>

It isn't uncommon to see a policeman cycling along on the wrong side of the road. And in most cases traffic policemen ignore smaller violations of the road traffic act such as stopping in the middle of a pedestrian crossing. The leeway they have leaves room for arbitrary actions by the police – for example when they make sure that bicycle couriers and motorcyclists stick to the written law more rigidly than others.

Chaos or Everything Half as Bad?

The written and effectively practiced traffic rules differ more in Japan than in many other countries. By not intervening, Japanese transport policy underlines this difference. Does such a system lead to chaos and arbitrariness? Or could it possibly be that things work better than in places where everyone sticks to the laws?

That legal and practical norms aren't congruent isn't that unusual. In Germany, too, it is regarded as absurd

for a pedestrian to stop at a lonely red light in the middle of the night. But these differences usually apply to the laws with the least consequences and lowest fines. Perhaps noisy teenagers are charged 5 Euro for disregarding red lights more often than elderly ladies in Germany. That is arbitrariness too, but not on the same level as a system in which even massive speeding, reckless driving, and ignoring someone's right of way with potentially fatal consequences can be judged as falling "within the [unwritten] norm" by the police.

The damage to property and persons by unlawful road conduct in Japan appears astonishingly low: The number of accidents may be continually on the increase, but the number of road deaths has decreased in the past few years – not least due to the drastic tightening of the laws. Compared with other OECD countries, the figures even appear low.

But these numbers are to be taken with a pinch of salt. In Japan, a road

death is classified as such if the person dies within 24 hours of the accident (in most OECD-countries the timeframe is 30 days). The number of road accidents listed in Japanese statistics only includes those with damage done to persons. Accidents with property damage are usually not reported to the police at all to avoid higher insurance rates.

In addition to the danger on life and limb come the disdainful delays, inconveniences, and breathing difficulties that result from traffic jams and incorrectly parked cars. But is it all just about personal displeasure? Our own observations have shown that there are never less than 3 parked cars on Tokyo's streets per kilometer of no parking zone. The police force tries to fight them with halfhearted campaigns of "Let's park correctly!"-slogans.



One cannot park on this street.
Picture by Isa Dücke

Unfortunately, hardly any studies on the damage to the economy exist. According to estimates of the Transport Ministry, labor time lost due to traffic jams alone amounts to 30 hours per person and year. A total of 3.8 billion hours – although a third of all passenger kilometers are covered by train.

Mutual consideration in traffic naturally improves road safety. But an across-the-board high level of tolerance regarding offences against the law has nothing to do with consideration. On the contrary – it heightens the risk for everyone. And the unwritten, practiced norms are especially hard to grasp for foreigners, while the dual norm system also leaves leeway for arbitrariness. Precious labor time is unnecessarily lost.

For 2006, we hope that the police enforce the new traffic laws more rigidly. We will continue to stop at red traffic lights, even on our bicycles, and we resolve to enlighten white haired ladies on scooters on the road traffic act in future.



Current Research

Transfer of Institutional Characteristics and Management Practices in Sports — From European Football to the Development of Professional Football in Japan

In this exploratory research project, Harald Dolles (DIJ) and Sten Soderman (Stockholm University, School of Business) will place professional football in Japan in the context of the global spread of the football business. European football clubs were largely owned and run as a hobby until the 1980s when they became a large, high-profile, for-profit industry. Top teams left their traditional local areas, and have now become national and global brands. They have created a fan base around the globe, and with increased coverage of the games on local TV networks worldwide, international supporters are able to follow their teams and favourite players. Geographical market expansion especially towards East Asia has opened up new possibilities for merchandising and sponsorship in the football business, and considerable amounts have been offered by top teams to attract the best players worldwide.

When, in the late 1980s, the idea of a professional football league started to materialize in Japan (the so called J-League), foundation committee members made an extensive study of professional sports models in the USA and Europe, finally deciding on a model tailored to their preferences. By examining the implementation as well as the immediate and sustainable success of the J-League during their first decade as a neglected research example, Harald Dolles and Sten Soderman will challenge existing assumptions about “the game” in Europe with the institutional arrangements, various interests, and parties involved in the practice and consumption of football in Japan. This may shed light —also with reference to other industries — on the conditions as well as the necessity for adjustments in transferring institutional and organizational practices abroad.

A conceptual framework of professional sports management is elaborated on with Japan in mind. This network of value captures identifies and defines the business parameters of professional football that vary from those of any other business. The framework includes the following dimensions: (1) the product and its features, (2) the various customer groups, and (3) the vision of the future of the club that is central to different levels of strategy

aggregation. Knowing how these value capture dimensions are interlinked is significant and has practical relevance and importance. To advance the empirical analysis further the value captures will be organized along two additional dimensions: the extent of “virtuality” as well as the spatial spread into local, regional, and international or global business. Finally, two dominating trends in the football business will be elaborated upon: (1) exploring global markets, and (2) developing the individual club as a global brand.

Following DIJ Working Papers are available on this research project:

05/6 Harald Dolles and Sten Soderman: *Implementing a Professional Football League in Japan – Challenges to Research in International Business*

05/5 Harald Dolles and Sten Soderman: *Ahead of the Game – The Network of Value Captures in Professional Football*

DIJ Events

DIJ and Institute of Asian Affairs (Hamburg): *Environmental Dialogue of German and Japanese Civil Society Actors*

(Tokyo, February 7, 2006)

Environmental protection is a much-discussed topic, and when it comes up in Japan, reference is often made to Germany as a role model, or “environmentally advanced” country. On the other hand, Japan can also offer some impulses for the German environmental discourse.

As a part of the initiative “Germany in Japan 2005/2006”, Isa Dücke from the DIJ organised a symposium with panel discussion, bringing together ex-

perts from both the research community and citizens’ movements to discuss concrete environmental measures that can be implemented by the citizens of both countries.

In the morning sessions, four experts from Japan and Germany introduced the environmental movements in their respective countries. They gave broad overviews and introduced examples of work done by environmental activists. The afternoon session began with a keynote speech by writer and environmental activist Alex Kerr that was the starting point for an intense panel discussion in which other specialists joined the presenters. In dialogue with the audience, the panelists discussed what environmental activists in both countries could learn from each other. Topics included not only the differences between Japan and Germany and the applicability of strategies in each country, but also the potential for international cooperation among citizens active in environmental movements.

DIJ and Japan Investor Relations and Investor Support Inc. (Tokyo): *Mergers & Acquisitions – Reshaping the Industrial Landscape in Japan and Germany*

(Tokyo, February 27, 2006)

Mergers and acquisitions of enterprises and business units play an increasingly important role in Japan and Germany, though the merger intensity (measured as the transactions’ overall volume in relation to a country’s gross national product) is lower than in a lot of other developed countries, for instance the Netherlands, Great Britain and the U.S. The reasons for this are to be found in different inter-firm relations and management structures. Nevertheless, the Japanese and the German economies are undergoing drastic changes that are influencing mergers and acquisitions.

This was the starting point for this conference which dealt with the question of how the latest developments in legal systems, in capital markets and in bank-firm relationships are influencing mergers and acquisitions in Japan and Germany.



Environmental dialogue of German and Japanese civil society actors



The venue began with lectures on the framework for mergers and acquisitions in Germany. Christian Kirchner (Humboldt University) took a critical look at M&A-related developments in German and European community law. He argued that while German legal developments closely follow those in European Community law, they are not exactly the same in all aspects. European Community law facilitates cross-border mergers but enforces strict merger-control rules, and the take-over law will create a well-defined market for corporate control in Europe (and in Germany). The industrial framework, namely the dissolution of Germany's industrial relations as they were when they constituted "Germany Inc.", was explained by Martin Schulz (Fujitsu Research Institute). Obviously, Germany's traditional links between financial institutions and manufacturing companies are weakening – at least with regard to shareholdings. Combined with this is a shift from domestic restructuring to strategic investment, and the building of EU-wide production and distribution networks.

In the second session, two case studies showed how companies actually pursue mergers and acquisitions – not only in Japan and Germany, but on a worldwide scale. James Minney (Meiji Dresdner Asset Management, MDAM) explained the investor's perspective, stressing that mergers and acquisitions have to increase shareholder value, and that for MDAM, corporate governance, especially increasing the monitoring function, is essential for the development of M&A. Margret Suckale (Deutsche Bahn AG) explained how the once state-monopoly railway developed into a modern logistics service provider, through acquisitions amongst other things. An explanation of the economic rationale

behind Deutsche Bahn's acquisition of the American company Bax was given along with practical examples from the integration.

The afternoon program consisted of a panel discussion and an extensive question and answer session. The panel was comprised of German and Japanese company representatives and researchers who shared their views on mergers and acquisitions. Martin Arnold (PricewaterhouseCoopers) in his comments on the new Japanese corporate law and tax laws stated that the new measures will generally allow for more flexibility in implementing reorganizations in Japan. However, major parts of the new Japanese Corporate Law which are of relevance for foreign companies planning to engage in M&A transactions in Japan have been delayed by one year – which may give Japanese companies the opportunity to protect themselves from takeovers.

Jochen Legewie (CNC Japan) emphasised that communication is crucial for the success of industrial mergers – both at the time of the announcement and even more so during the following weeks, months and years. In the initial stages, the focus lies on external communications. But successful integration is only possible with the careful implementation of an effective internal employee communications program.

Yoshio Osawa (Mizuho Securities and J-IRIS) elaborated on one of the most spectacular M&A cases in Japan's recent history – the take-over bid of Livedoor for Fuji TV. Osawa said, however, that the Livedoor case was rather abnormal for Japan's industrial structure and capital market.

Marcel Tyrell (Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and Goethe University, Frankfurt) stated that the German financial system was undergoing a transition from a bank-

based system to a more capital market-oriented financial system. This process is ongoing, and interestingly enough, U.S.-based investment banks like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, as well as the Deutsche Bank, are stepping up their German M&A activities.

Tomomi Yano (Pension Fund Association Japan) elaborated

on the role of pension funds in mergers and acquisitions, pointing out that the development of the stock market in Japan has an enormous influence on the layout of M&A. Yano suggested that the Tokyo Stock Exchange should be reformed – in order to further improve the situation.

Masaru Yoshimori (University of the Air, Emeritus Professor, Yokohama National University) spoke on "Why Japan Should Not Imitate the Anglo-Saxon System", with particular reference to the idea that managers and employees together create the value of the corporation, and that M&A attempts, friendly or hostile, will not lead to an enhanced corporate value unless they increase the welfare of corporate employees first and only later increase corporate and shareholder value.

The conference, jointly organised by DIJ, Andreas Moerke, and Japan Investor Relations and Investor Support, Inc., was part of the initiative "Germany in Japan 2005/2006". We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of PricewaterhouseCoopers and the logistic support provided by the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation, the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Japan, and JETRO. The presentations will be made available on the DIJ website.

DIJ-Forum: Glenda Roberts, Professor, Waseda University: Work/life balance in corporate Tokyo: Whose Work? Whose Life? Whose Balance?
(December 15, 2005)

Since the early 1990s, in its efforts to shore up the birthrate, the Japanese government has put forth numerous policies designed to help families harmonize work and family life, and has encouraged firms to implement these policies. One could say that the government is trying to revolutionize Japanese gender practices. Glenda Roberts, through analysis of case studies from two large firms in Tokyo, has explored the extent to which harmonization is possible for career employees, and her lecture traced the differences in corporate environment and attitudes toward employee development in the two firms. Besides explaining differences in rationales for implementing policies, Roberts sought to document some of the gendered aspects of work/life balance, pointing out the reasons why piecemeal attempts toward gender equality do little to achieve a real quality of life for male and female "corporate warriors."



Tyrell, Legewie, Arnold, Osawa, Yano, Yoshimori, Moerke

DIJ-Forum: Katsuyuki Yakushiji, Chief Editor of the monthly magazine *RONZA (Asahi Shinbun)*: Foreign Policy and Nationalism in Contemporary Japan
(January 16, 2006)

While Prime Minister Koizumi was partly successful in reforming the Japanese economic system and the organization of the LDP, his foreign policy put diplomatic relations with China and South Korea at great risk. In particular, his visits to Yasukuni Shrine were criticized as both a means to glorify the Asia-Pacific War and as symbolic acts to justify the Japanese invasion and colonization of Asia. Mr. Koizumi's insistence in this matter and the ensuing refusals of both Chinese and Korean heads of government to meet with him, point to the seriousness of the situation and the danger of Japan becoming increasingly isolated in Northeast Asia. In his lecture, Yakushiji argued that the Japanese public needs to acknowledge this development as a homemade historical problem. Still, many Japanese don't agree with the claims made by China and South Korea, but instead harshly criticize both countries. Many weekly magazines and TV tabloid shows have stirred nationalist feeling, releasing a virtual flood of emotional writings strongly rebuking Japan's neighbouring countries. Politicians have been catering to the spreading nationalist trend. To see a real change in Japanese public opinion, Yakushiji argued, sufficient education on Japanese war-time history in Asia is indispensable. In his lecture Yakushiji explored the historical and political background of these phenomena and suggested some ways to deal with foreign policy and nationalism in contemporary Japan.

DIJ-Forum: Jean-Pascal Bassino, Research Fellow, Maison Franco-Japonaise: Regional Inequality in Japan: Income, Health, Life Style, and Stature
(February 9, 2006)

Bassino made a presentation about regional inequality in 20th century Japan. Japan's high-speed economic growth in the second half of the 20th century was accompanied by a rapid convergence in regional income. The main causes of this income convergence were migrations and the accumulation of public capital in rural areas, catch-up in production technology, and a narrowing of the gap in human capital. However, income is only one measure of welfare; other indicators such as life expectancy, nutritional status, health conditions,

and the average stature of children and adults can also be used to assess variations in the biological welfare of the Japanese population. Because the average stature of a population reflects the cumulative influence of the nutritional status and health conditions during gestation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence, it is one of the best indicators of biological welfare.

DIJ PUBLICATIONS

Annette Schad-Seifert, Gabriele Vogt (eds.): Japanstudien: Jahrbuch des Deutschen Instituts für Japanstudien „Deutschland in Japan“ [“Germany in Japan”], vol. 17. Munich: Iudicium, 2005, 318 pp. (ISBN 3-89129-380-1; ISSN 0938-6491)



On the occasion of the initiative “Germany in Japan 2005/2006” volume 17 of Japanstudien is dedicated to the relations between Japan and Germany in the modern era. Since the Meiji period both countries have enjoyed continuous periods of contact that have led to processes of mutual reception and co-operation in culture, science, economics, and politics. This volume sheds light on the historical background of these processes on the Japanese side by examining the changes in interactions with Germany in modern day Japan. A further topic that is addressed is the Japanese perceptions of Germany that have shaped the recent processes of reception and cooperation. Published in December 2005.

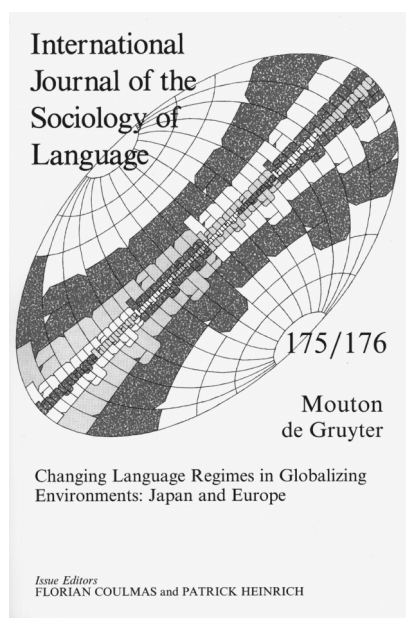
Introduction: A. Schad-Seifert, G. Vogt: Deutschland in Japan – Zwischen von Siebold und der Maus [Germany in Japan – Between von Siebold and the mouse].

Contributions: E. Franz: Deutsche Mediziner in Japan – ein Beitrag zum Wissenstransfer in der Edo-Zeit [German medical scientists in Japan – mediators of knowledge transfer in the 18th and 19th century] • U.M. Zachmann: Imperialism in a nutshell: conflict and the “Concert of Powers” in the Tripartite Intervention, 1895 • H. Fuess: Deutsche Jesuiten in Japan [German Jesuits in Japan] • A. Moerke: Schlagwort „Nicklisch“ – zur Repräsentanz eines deutschen Wirtschaftswissenschaftlers in japanischen Nachschlagewerken [Keyword “Nicklisch” – on the appearance of a German management scientist in Japanese encyclopedia] • H. Menkhaus, K. Yamauchi: Die japanische Beschäftigung mit dem deutschen Rechtswesen [The Japanese engagement with the Japanese law system] • M. Penney: Rising sun, iron cross – military Germany in Japanese popular culture • S. Nartschik: Gutenberg in Tokio: Japanische Rezeption eines deutschstämmigen Kulturerbes [Gutenberg in Tokyo – the Japanese reception of a German cultural heritage] • I. Dücke: Deutschland als Vorbild im japanischen Umweltdiskurs [Germany as a role model in Japan's environmental discourse] • R.F. Wittkamp: Cultural Turn in der Literaturtheorie? Beobachtungen zur Neuauflage von Iwanami Literary Studies und dem „Sonderband Literaturtheorie“ [Cultural turn and theory of literature – some remarks on Iwanami Literary Studies and the supplementary volume Theory of Literature] • W. Schwentker: Max Webers „Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus“ nach 100 Jahren – Perspektiven der Sozialwissenschaften in Ostasien. Bericht über ein Symposium an der Universität Osaka [Max Weber's “The ethic of protestantism and the spirit of capitalism” after 100 years – perspectives of social sciences in East Asia. Report on a symposium at the University of Osaka] • Rezensionen [Book Reviews].

Florian Coulmas, Patrick Heinrich (eds.): International Journal of the Sociology of Language 175/176. Changing Language Regimes in Globalizing Environments: Japan and Europe. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005, 324 pp. (Print ISSN 0165-2516; Electronic ISSN 1613-3668)

What are the consequences and concomitants of globalization in the field





of language? Answers to this question vary with the languages and the research domains in question. The vantage point of this special issue is the concept of language regimes, loosely defined as sets of habits and attitudes, legal provisions, and ideologies. Japan is at the centre of the discussion, providing as it does a case where the effects of intensifying global interdependence are strongly felt. Ever since Japan embarked on a course of rapid modernization in the final decades of the nineteenth century, its government has operated under monolingual assumptions and made great efforts to install a monolingual language regime stressing homogeneity and a uniform standard. In our days, both the language regime that has been in place through the better part of the twentieth century and the underlying assumptions are being undercut by developments originating outside, and having repercussions beyond, Japan's borders. Among the many aspects of Japan's language regime, which was functionally well-suited for modern industrial society and a catching-up economy, but which is losing its relevance in the emerging postmodern knowledge society, are the presumed identity of state, people and language; the exclusive status and the comprehensive functional range of the national language; the linguistic standard of right and false keyed to an ideal written norm; and the assumption of discrete language systems.

The articles in this special issue show that as Japan is getting to terms with growing internal linguistic diversity and with the need for more extensive communication across national borders, language services, language policies, language-related industries,

and language preferences are being subject to adjustment – some in a piecemeal fashion, some more abruptly. Similar changes have been going on for decades elsewhere, especially in Western Europe, which therefore and despite many obvious differences serves as a useful plane of reference for many comparisons.

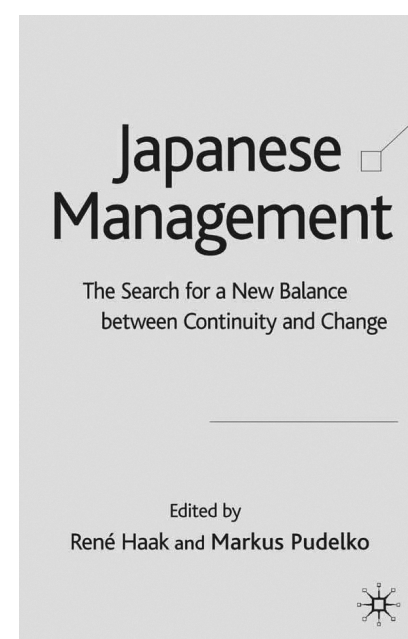
Globalization has many faces, and changes of language regimes induced by it will continue warranting observation and analysis. The International Journal of the Sociology of Language is an obvious place to do this. With the present double issue we hope to shed some light on relevant issues and stimulate further discussion. The seed conference took place on three sunny days in the spring of 2004 at Duisburg-Essen University. It was generously supported by a grant from Stiftung Volkswagenwerk which is gratefully acknowledged.

Contributions: F. Coulmas: Changing language regimes in globalizing environments • G. Extra, K. Yagmur: Sociolinguistic perspectives on emerging multilingualism in urban Europe • T. Katsuragi: Japanese language policy from the point of view of public philosophy • T. Taki: Labor migration and the language barrier in contemporary Japan: the formation of a domestic language regime of a globalizing state • J.C. Maher: Metroethnicity, language, and the principle of Cool • P. Backhaus: Signs of multilingualism in Tokyo – a diachronic look at the linguistic landscape • M.G. Noguchi: Politics, the media, and Korean language acquisition in Japan • F. Inoue: Econolinguistic aspects of multilingual signs in Japan • A. Shikama: Japan as a host country: attitudes toward migrants • K. Hara: Regional dialect and cultural development in Japan and Europe • P. Heinrich: Language ideology in JFL textbooks • T. Carroll: Beyond *keigo*: smooth communication and the expression of respect in Japanese as a foreign language • C. Galan: Learning to read and write in Japanese (*kokugo* and *nihongo*): a barrier to multilingualism? • Y. Ando: Japanese language instruction and the question of “correctness” • C. Hohenstein: Interactional expectations and linguistic knowledge in academic expert discourse (Japanese/German) • J.V. Neustupný: Foreigners and the Japanese in contact situations: evaluation of norm deviations.

René Haak, Markus Pudelko (eds.): **Japanese Management. The Search for a New Balance between Continuity and Change.** Houndmills, Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2005. 280 S. (ISBN 1-4039-4194-7)

Japanese management is currently considered to be in crisis. This book analyzes the degree to which the Japanese management model is changing, in order to regain its competitiveness. It brings together up-to-date research on this important topic by a number of the best known American, Asian and European scholars of Japanese management. A broad variety of management areas such as strategy, corporate governance, globalization, organization, finance, HRM, production, innovation, organizational learning and retailing is covered.

Contributions: M. Pudelko, R. Haak: The current state of the Japanese economy and challenges for Japanese management: an overview • D. Methé: Continuity through change in Japanese Management: institutional and strategic influences • R. J. Ballon: Organizational survival • S. L. Beechler: The long road to globalization: in search of a new balance between continuity and change in Japanese MNCs • R. Dore: Innovation for whom? • K. Teramoto & C. Benton: Organizational learning mechanisms for corporate revitalization • L. Nottage, L. Wolff: Corporate governance and law reform in Japan: from the lost decade to the end of history? • J.C. Abegglen: A perfect financial storm • M. Pudelko: Japanese human resource management: from being a miracle to needing one? • R. Haak: Japanese production management: organizational learning at the confluence



of knowledge transfer, technology development and work • M. Pudelko: Organization – continuity vs. change: the key dilemma for Japanese management.

DIJ WORKING PAPERS

05/7 Harald Dolles and Niklas Wilmking: *International Joint Ventures in China after WTO Accession: Will Trust Relations Change?*

BOOK REVIEWS

Atsushi Miura: *Karyūshakai. Arata-na kaisōshūdan shutsugen* [Society of the lower reaches. The emergence of a new social class]. Tokyo: Kobunsha, 2005, 284 pp., 780 Yen (ISBN 4-334-03321-1) [三浦展、「下流社会。新たな階層集団の出現」光文社新書、2005]

This book is about the ongoing re-differentiation of Japanese society. The author looks at it from below. *Karyū* means 'lower reaches of a stream', a term he uses to signify the new class whose appearance he announces in the title of the book. He does not speak of a new underclass, since the reconfiguration of society that he and several other social scientists detect differs in many ways from the class society of early capitalism that that term clearly calls to mind.

Rather than by exploitation and dire poverty, the *karyūshakai* is characterised by its members' lack of energy and willpower to get on in the world. It isn't destitution and misery, but complacency with the minimum level of material wellbeing Japan's affluent society offers even to those considered losers. Being fed up with cutthroat competition and the need to struggle just to keep up with the neighbours distinguishes a growing segment of the young generation who thus react to the changes brought about by neo-liberal reforms and at the same time spurn them on.

As others have done before him, Miura, a well-known non-fiction writer, points out the rapidly growing disparities of income and class consciousness. *Karyūshakai* is an elegy to the middle class society which celebrated equality of opportunity and steady advance if only you were willing to work hard. But dedication alone can no longer guarantee improvement of one's liv-

ing conditions, and, what is more, in a society where a high level of comfort is taken for granted many don't have strong incentives to exert themselves in order to get ahead. If you just refrain from assuming the responsibility of raising children and paying for their education, you can lead a relatively easy life as a *freeter*. Who needs a Porsche, after all! A computer game offers just as much satisfaction.

The picture of Japanese society that Miura paints is a sad one, both because the painful effects of neo-liberalist reforms suffered by the socially weak become quite apparent, and because his view of society is so pathetic. It is the view of a marketing specialist who pigeonholes people in terms of their consumption habits. Young women are "brides", "regular office ladies", "millionaires", "girls"-or *gyaru* which isn't quite the same-and "dried fish", a reference to the heroin of a manga who leads of a secluded life. Their male counterparts as classified by Miura are just four types, "young executives", "LOHAS" (devotees to a Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) "readers of the magazine SPA!", and *freeters*. Whether you belong to one or another of these types depends on your preference of brand products, on whether you patronise convenience stores and discount shops or have a taste for expensive restaurants, etc.

If this is the society we live in it is depressing indeed. Miura has certainly collected a lot of data in support of his view. Yet, his conclusions are rather crude as are the criteria he proposes to determine social class. If you are satisfied with a computer game instead of setting your sights on a Porsche and working long hours to get one, you belong to the *karyūshakai*. Other characteristics are "the five Ps", personal computer, pager (mobile phone), play station, potato chips and pet bottle. If you indulge in these pleasures you belong to the *karyūshakai* or never-climbing society of those who will not or cannot work hard to climb the social ladder.

This book is interesting not just because of its many pertinent, if sometimes gloomy observations about Japan's materialistic hedonistic society, but also because it testifies to the fact that the Japanese are concerned about the phenomena he describes, that is, the emergence of a new social stratification. The book quickly became a bestseller. The first print run was sold out within days after its release in September 2005, and it has been reprinted ten times since.

(Florian Coulmas)

Kōtarō Akizuki: *Arienai nihongo* [Impossible Japanese]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, 2005, 321 pp., 720 Yen (ISBN 4-480-06224-6 C0281) [秋月高太郎、『ありえない日本語』、ちくま新書、2005]

Imagine the following situation: Two young people in a convenience store who are eagerly praising a certain convenience food item as "Isn't it not good (*yokunakunai*)?" are interrupted by a middle-aged man trying to figure out what this double negated question is supposed to mean. "So what is it, good or bad?" he wants to know. This scene from a recent television commercial serves as the starting point of Kōtarō Akizuki's book *Arienai nihongo* (Impossible Japanese). It deals with intergenerational communication problems and a question that is probably as old as language itself: why older people – in Japan as elsewhere – apparently don't understand much of what younger people say. The reason for this, as Akizuki clearly states from the start, is not the often lamented decay of the Japanese language, but a complicated mixture of sociodemographic factors interacting with linguistic universals of change common to every living language.

Take as an example the term that gave Akizuki's book its name. *Arienai* is normally used to express the unlikelihood of a future state of affairs occurring. Young people, however, are increasingly using the term to indicate that present circumstances are not in line with what they expected them to be. The communication gap (*zure*) between older and younger people results from the fact that the two groups of speakers have different conceptions of what the term *arienai* should refer to. For the former it can only be used to make propositions about the future, whereas for the latter anything that is unexpected can be *arienai*.

It would be easy to interpret this semantic expansion of *arienai* as symptomatic of an apparent disregard for reality among Japan's post-bubble generation of *freeters* and *NEETs*, but Akizuki gives several examples to show that the subjectivisation of linguistic expressions is not at all unique to today's young people but is actually a general semantic trend.

Other terms common to young people's language discussed in a similarly enlightening way are *nanige ni* (somehow, somewhat), which is a back-formation derived by de-negating the term *nanigenaku*; *yabai* (dangerous), an originally negative term increasingly endowed with positive meaning; and *uzai* (unpleasant, dis-



tasteful), a neologism used to express discontent with a situation one has no power to alter.

In addition, Akizuki devotes three chapters of his book to the linguistic and sociodemographic background of recent changes in politeness forms: the sentence ending *janaiidesuka* (isn't it?) intended to imply a shared speaker-hearer knowledge which in reality doesn't exist; the recent spread of *yoroshikatta deshōka* (Might I ... ?) in family restaurants and other chain businesses; and a general tendency of dropping addressee honorifics (*tameguchi*). The basic problem here, as Akizuki convincingly argues, is not a general disrespect by younger people towards social hierarchies, but an increasingly anonymous social organisation of everyday life in which there are many situations where such hierarchies are no longer clearly recognisable.

A noteworthy point is the empirical bias of the book. Self-declared *otaku* and subculture linguist Akizuki draws on a rich corpus of data reaching from manga bubbles and web diaries to the poems of the Man'yōshū and e-mails in his personal mailbox. This variety of data allows Akizuki to capture some of the most current problems of intergenerational communication in Japan today. The strength of the book is Akizuki's insightful analysis of these problems, which takes into consideration both linguistic factors such as ease of articulation, semantic bleaching and universal politeness strategies, and sociodemographic factors like power differences between old and young, changing employment practices, growing impersonalisation of everyday interaction, and female emancipation.

Akizuki succeeds in explaining very complex phenomena in very simple terms. The plain and lucid style of the book makes *Arienai nihongo* a pleasant and profitable read for everyone interested in language change, sociolinguistics, and/or demographics in present day Japan.

(Peter Backhaus)

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