

KONFERENZBERICHTE

Life Course and Life Style in Comparison

11th Meeting of the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences, Tokyo, Japan
7. - 9. Oktober 2010

The topics "Life Course and Life Style" were discussed from a comparative perspective at the 11th meeting of the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences (GJSSS), which was held at Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan, from October 7 to 9, 2010. For four days the participants engaged in intensive discussion of different aspects of life course and life style in Germany and Japan, with more than twenty presentations serving as inspiration, offering a broad range of approaches to the topic.

After Gisela Trommsdorff (Konstanz University) as president of the society and Akira Tokuyasu (Hosei University) as chief organizer of the meeting and vice-president to the society had given a short introduction to the topic under focus, Toshio Matsuda (President of Hosei University) gave a warm welcome to the participants. He was followed by a high-class selection of congratulatory speakers, lead by the German Ambassador to Japan, Volker Stanzel, who – with the celebrations of 150 years of German-Japanese friendship starting just a few days after the conference – especially congratulated the society on its commitment to fostering a scientific network between German and Japan. In a similar vein, Josef Kreiner (Hosei University/University of Bonn) gave an overview of the roots of Japanese studies in Germany in his commemorative lecture.

Giving credit to the thematic amplitude, the rest of the conference was divided into eight sections, the first of which concentrated on "Inequality in Comparison". Starting off with an analysis of status anxiety, subjective exclusion and happiness, Carola Hommerich (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo) presented results of a comparative survey carried out with Heinz Bude and Ernst-Dieter Lantermann (both from Kassel University), pointing to strong anxieties within Japanese society, most of all among young Japanese. Masato Kimura (Waseda University) followed by reporting on his study of homeless in Tokyo. The section was rounded off by Florian Coulmas (Director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo) and Wolfgang Jagodzinski (University of Cologne) showing results of a survey on the understanding of the word "Happiness" amongst students in Germany and Japan.

The second section, focusing on "Young People on Their Life Stage", proved to be closely connected to the first. Vinai Norasakkunkit's (Minnesota State University) striking account of psychological consequences of post-industrial anomie on self and motivation among Japanese youth triggered a lively discussion, further fuelled by Ritsuko Kuze's (Hosei University) analysis of regional differences in Japanese youth

employment and Márta Fülöp's (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) account of her research on the conceptualization of competition among German, Japanese, Hungarian and Canadian youth.

The focus then turned to "Policy and Society", "Community" and "Japanese Politics", amongst others with presentations on emission trading (Sven Rudolph, University of Kassel); social policy in comparison (Chikako Mori, Saga University); and an account of post-populism in Tokyo by Mototaka Mori (Waseda University).

Aspects of immigration and assimilation were discussed in the session on "Ethnicity". A comparative analysis of dominant life courses of ethnic minorities in Germany and Japan by David Chiavacci (University of Zurich) was followed by Shigeki Sato's (Hosei University) account of the transformation of the German discourse on integration and an insight into acculturation research by Paul G. Schmitz (Bonn University).

The session on "Family in Comparison" was opened by Bernhard Nauck (Chemnitz University of Technology) reporting results of an empirical test of two models of social change of family formation using Germany and Japan as sample countries. An analysis of the value of children in Japan presented by Makoto Kobayashi (Tamagawa University) and his team nicely tied up with this, as it discussed intergenerational differences with regard to child bearing.

Following a session on "Culture and Value", the meeting concluded with a special session, in which Ken'ichi Tominaga (Tokyo University), Hiroshi Namiki (Keio University), Taketoshi Takuma (Tokyo Metropolitan University), Hans-Joachim Kornadt (University of the Saarland) and Gisela Trommsdorff discussed the missions and roles of the GJSSS in past and future.

A very warm thank you goes out to Akira Tokuyasu and his team from Hosei University for the smooth proceedings of the conference and the most hospitable atmosphere. Most impressive for both German and Japanese participants was the workshop on Noh theatre which was part of the welcoming party. The conference room on the 26th floor of Hosei University's Boissonade Tower with its breathtaking view of the Tokyo skyline was inspirational, a fact that without doubt also contributed to the lively participation in the discussions.

Carola Hommerich

First Students' Conference on Bengal Related Studies

Südasiens-Seminar, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), 29.-31. Oktober 2010

The South Asia Seminar of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg along with the association Bengal Link e. V. hosted the First Students' Conference on Bengal Related Studies from Friday, October 29 to Sunday, October 31, 2010. The