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Yoshio Sugimoto

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An Introduction to Japanese Society

Fourth Edition

Now in its fourth edition, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* remains essential reading for students of Japanese society.

Internationally renowned scholar Yoshio Sugimoto uses both English and Japanese sources to update and expand upon his original narrative in this sophisticated yet highly readable text. This book explores the breadth and diversity of Japanese society, with chapters covering class, geographical and generational variation, work, education, gender, minorities, popular culture, and the establishment. Updates include an exploration of the 'Cool Japan' phenomenon and the explosion of Japanese culture overseas. This edition also features the latest research into Japanese society, updated statistical data, and coverage of recent events, including the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and the change in government.

Written in a clear and engaging style, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* provides an insight into all aspects of a diverse and ever-evolving contemporary Japan.

Yoshio Sugimoto is Professor Emeritus in the School of Social Sciences and Communications at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

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Preface to the fourth edition

Writing a revised and expanded edition of a book is akin to renovating a house. Extensions must be added to the existing structure to give space to fresh realities, while other sections require updating or redesigning. Although the main structure of this book has stood the test of time since its initial publication in 1997, keeping up with the changing features of Japanese society in the 2010s requires me to amend many of its parts, a task which has been both exhausting and intellectually rewarding.

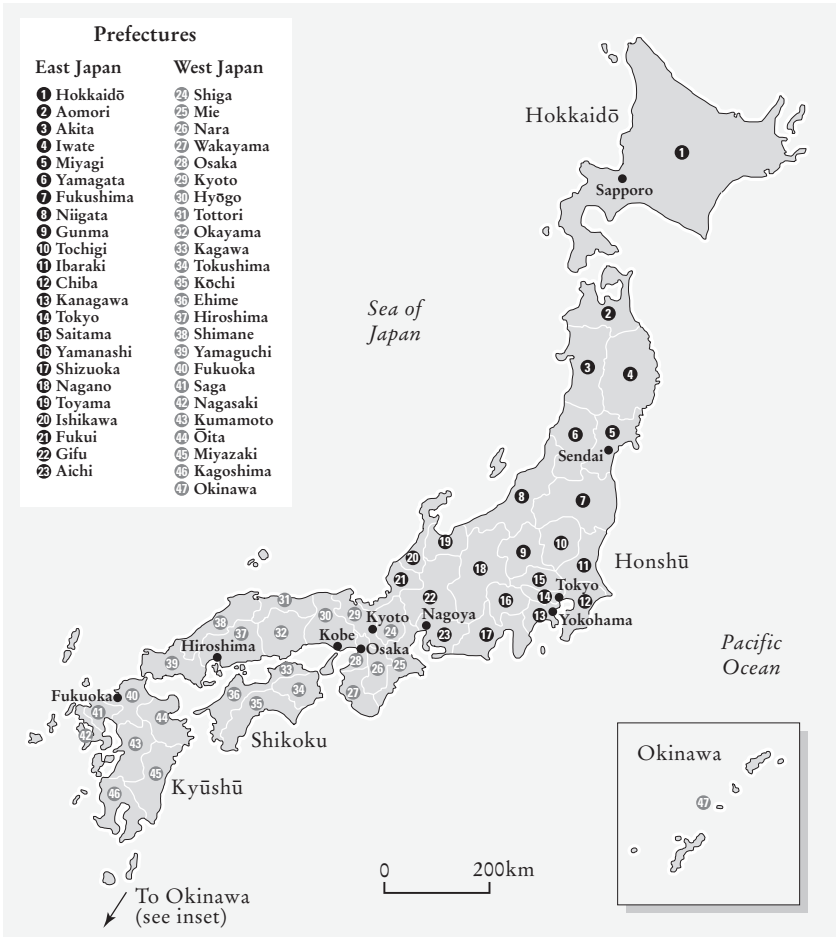
The readers of the past three editions will find some new furnishings and appliances in the renovated house, including sections on the spread of Japan's pop culture abroad and the 'Cool Japan' debate; the Fukushima nuclear explosion and its aftermath; the 'history war' between some Japanese and some in neighboring countries; and the expansion of English-language education and its implications. In all chapters, I have made considerable changes to reflect the rise of new developments and the fall of old patterns, while updating demographic data as much as possible.

For the renovation to be completed, I owe a great deal to academics and students, from all across the globe, with whom I have had lively discussions for the past few years at lectures, seminars, and conferences. In addition, numerous emails and letters I exchanged with readers of the previous editions around the world helped me reconsider, reconstruct, and refine many points. I am grateful for their warm encouragements and constructive criticisms.

By coincidence, I have finished writing the fourth edition in Kyoto, Japan, my hometown where I grew up. I wrote in the preface to the first edition that completing a book is always a liberating experience for me and it still is. I hope that readers will share some of my delight in treading the paths outlined in this text.

Yoshio Sugimoto
Kyoto
April 2014

Map of Japan



Map of Japan