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978-0-521-87956-9 - An Introduction to Japanese Society, Third Edition
Yoshio Sugimoto
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An Introduction to Japanese Society
Third Edition

Essential reading for students of Japanese society, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* now enters its third edition.

Here, internationally renowned scholar Yoshio Sugimoto writes a sophisticated, yet highly readable and lucid text, using both English and Japanese sources to update and expand upon his original narrative. The book challenges the traditional notion that Japan comprises a uniform culture, and draws attention to its subcultural diversity and class competition.

Covering all aspects of Japanese society, it includes chapters on class, geographical and generational variation, work, education, gender, minorities, popular culture and the establishment. This new edition features sections on: Japan's cultural capitalism; the decline of the conventional Japanese management model; the rise of the 'socially divided society' thesis; changes of government; the spread of manga, animation and Japan's popular culture overseas; and the expansion of civil society in Japan.

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

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Preface to the Third Edition

The objects of sociological analysis are fast-moving targets. Japanese society is no exception, as it has experienced colossal shifts on numerous fronts since 2003 when the second edition of this book was published. This third version expands on the previous editions, paying particular attention to three areas.

First, I sharpened the focus on class and stratification in Japanese society, a core feature of the book since its inception in 1997. The dominant discourse at the time and in earlier decades portrayed Japan as a uniquely homogeneous, classless society. In recent times we have witnessed a paradigmatic shift in which social disparities and cultural divisions are now emphasized or even overemphasized. While I welcome this unexpected turn of events, I also feel I must observe some caution in dealing with the emerging framework which ostensibly resembles the model that we began formulating some three decades ago.

Second, this third edition not only updates demographic data but elaborates on novel developments in Japanese society. We have, for example, included sections on the expansion of cultural capitalism, the casualization of labor, the rise of the popular culture industry, and the spread of civil society. Readers of the previous editions will notice that some of these discussions reflect my most recent thinking on Japanese society in the context of globalization and transnational interactions.

Third, I made a deliberate attempt to engage with aspects of Japanese society that hardly appear on the radar of mainstream English publications on Japan. This meant that I had to scrutinize studies that were published in Japanese in the 2000s in an endeavor to bring forward the research outcomes of Japanese scholars. The best scholarship on Japan is still produced in Japanese.

I have recently edited and published *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture* (Cambridge University Press 2009) in the expectation that it may serve as a complement to the present book. As it contains contributions by many authors on a wide range of themes, it is my hope that these two books work together to produce both a portrait and a landscape of contemporary Japanese society.

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Finally, I am grateful to two proficient editors, Vesna Rapajic and Miriam Riley, for their careful, thorough and meticulous work at different stages of the writing process. Their professionalism was an invaluable contribution to the final shape of this edition.

Yoshio Sugimoto
November 2009
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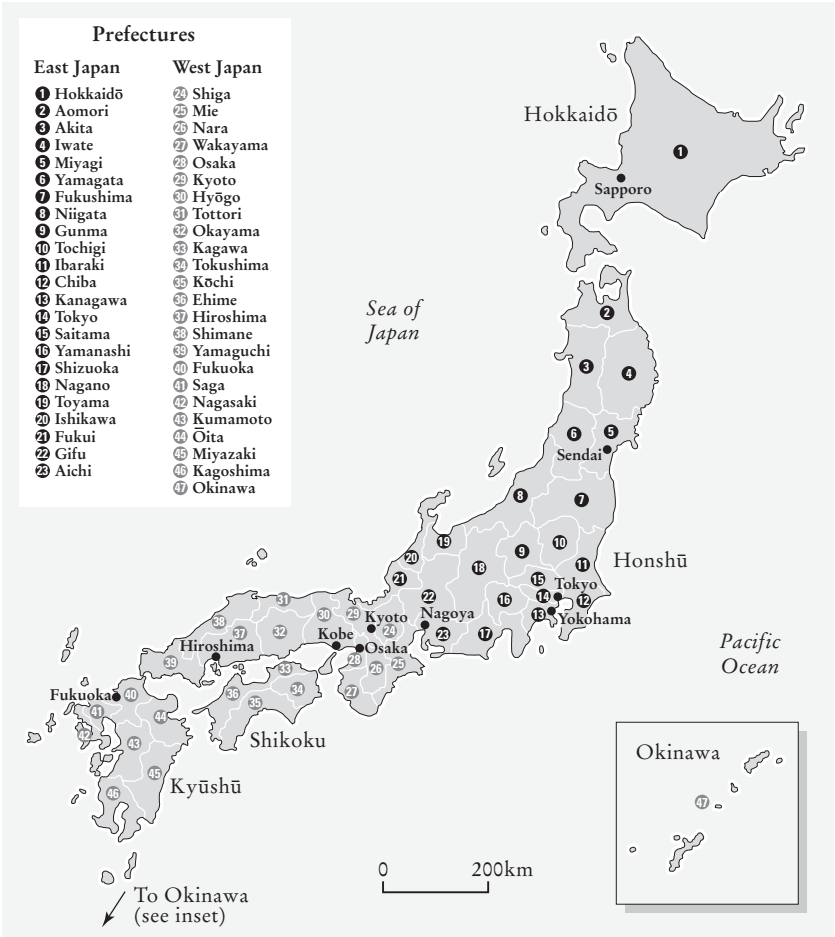

Map of Japan

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