Now in its fifth edition, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* provides a sophisticated, highly readable introduction to Japanese society by internationally renowned scholar Yoshio Sugimoto. Taking a sociological approach, the text examines the diverse and multifaceted nature of contemporary Japanese society with chapters covering class, geographical and generational variation, work, education, gender, ethnicity, religion, popular culture, and the establishment.

This edition begins with a new historical introduction placing the sociological analysis of contemporary Japan in context, and includes a new chapter on religion and belief systems. Comprehensively revised to include current research and statistics and to address in detail contemporary changes within Japanese society, the text covers changes to the labor market, evolving conceptions of family and gender, demographic shifts in an aging society, and the emergence of new social movements.

Each chapter now contains illustrative theme boxes, which provide contemporary perspectives on each topic, as well as research questions, recommended further readings and online resources to consolidate student understanding and guide further exploration.


*Yoshio Sugimoto* is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Social Inquiry at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.
Contents

List of figures, tables, and theme boxes xi
Preface to the fifth edition xvii
Acknowledgements xviii

Chapter 1  Historical backdrop: disintegration and restoration 1

I  Introduction 1
II  Japan as a variable 1
   1 Japan’s external boundaries 2
   2 Internal rivalry 4
III  Ancient times up to the Nara period 6
IV  Heian period: rise and fall of the nobility 8
V  The ascent of the samurai class and the duality of power 9
VI  Disintegration: the Warring States period 10
   1 The ascendancy of daimyō 10
   2 Recentralization and external expansionism 11
VII  Tokugawa: sweeping centralization and national closure 12
   1 Centralization 12
   2 National seclusion 13
   3 Demography and status classification 14
   4 Commoners’ culture 15
   5 Modernity in late Tokugawa Japan 15
VIII  The Meiji Restoration 17
   1 Alliance of strong peripheral domains in the west and the south 17
   2 The end of power duality: the establishment of Tokyo as the capital 17
   3 Rapid catch-up programs from above 18
   4 Land tax reform and the ‘parasite’ landlord class 18
   5 Expansionism and colonization 19
IX  Taishō democracy 20
X  The Fifteen Years’ War 21
   1 The Manchurian Incident 21
   2 The Second Sino-Japanese War 22
   3 The Pacific War 22
XI  Looking ahead 23
XII  Conclusion 23
Research questions 23
Further readings 24
## Chapter 2 The Japan phenomenon: analysis and understanding

### I Introduction

- 25

### II Sampling and visibility

- 25

### III Four models for understanding Japan

1. Monocultural model: group orientation and homogeneity
2. Multiethnic model: minority issues
3. Multiclass model: social stratification and inequality
4. Multicultural model

- 28

### IV Control of ideological capital

- 39

### V Seven phases of Japan analysis

- 40

### VI Three areas of deliberation

1. Convergence debate
2. Cultural relativism
3. Legitimation of dual codes

- 47

### VII Conclusion

- 56

- Research questions
- Further readings
- Online resources

## Chapter 3 Class: stratification and disparity

### I Introduction

- 58

### II From middle-class society to disparity society

1. Prolonged life expectancy
2. Declining birth rate
3. Pressure on the welfare structure

- 84

### III Classification of classes and segments

1. Hashimoto’s model
2. Kikkawa’s model: eight-segment analysis
3. Status inconsistency
4. Postmodernity and upper goods

- 62

### IV Reproduction of inequality

1. Inheritance of financial and property assets
2. Socialization and marriage

- 66

### V Debate and caution about the kakusa shakai thesis

- 74

### VI Japanese emic concepts of class

- 79

### VII Conclusion

- 81

- Research questions
- Further readings
- Online resources

## Chapter 4 Generations and geography: variations in an aging society

### I Introduction

- 84

### II A rapidly aging society

1. Prolonged life expectancy
2. Declining birth rate
3. Pressure on the welfare structure

- 84

- 87
III Generational variations 88
   1 The wartime generation 90
   2 The postwar generation 91
   3 The prosperity generation 92
   4 The global generation 94
IV Geographical variations 97
   1 Japan as a conglomerate of subnations 97
   2 Eastern versus western Japan 100
   3 Center versus periphery 102
   4 Ideological centralization 104
V Conclusion 105
Research questions 106
Further readings 106
Online resources 106

Chapter 5 Work: ‘Japanese-style’ management and cultural capitalism 107
I Introduction 107
II Small businesses: evolving bedrock of the economy 107
   1 Small businesses as numerical majority 107
   2 Plurality of small businesses 109
III Large companies: ‘Japanese-style’ management in transition 113
   1 Firm-based internal labor markets 114
   2 Manipulative definition of employee ability 116
   3 The family metaphor as a socialization device 118
IV Social costs of ‘Japanese’ work style 120
   1 Excessive hours of work 120
   2 Karoshi 120
   3 Tanshin funin 121
V Job market rationalization 123
   1 Casualization of labor 123
   2 Performance-based model 124
VI Cultural capitalism: an emerging megatrend 126
VII Enterprise unionism and labor movements 130
   1 Decline and skewing in union membership 130
   2 Capital–labor cooperation 133
VIII Conclusion 134
Research questions 135
Further readings 135
Online resources 135

Chapter 6 Education: diversity and unity 136
I Introduction 136
II Demography and stratification 137
   1 Two paths of schooling: academic and vocational 139
   2 The ideology of educational credentialism 141
Chapter 7  Gender and family: challenges to ideology  

I  Introduction  

II  The household registration system and ie ideology  
   1  Household head  
   2  Children born out of wedlock  
   3  Deterrence to divorce  
   4  Surname after marriage  
   5  Family tomb  
   6  Seki and ie  

III  The labor market and women’s employment profiles  
   1  The flattening M-shaped curve  
   2  The two-tier structure of the internal market  
   3  Four types of married women  

IV  Control of the female body  
   1  Contraception and abortion  
   2  Domestic violence  
   3  Sexual harassment  

V  Marriage and divorce  

VI  Types of households  
   1  Spread of single-person households  
   2  Nuclear family patterns  
   3  Decline in extended families  
   4  Schematic summary of the family  

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  
www.cambridge.org
VII Gender and sexual diversity
VIII Conclusion
Research questions
Further readings
Online resources

Chapter 8 Ethnicity and Japaneseness: defining the nation
I Introduction
II Japanese ethnocentrism
III Indigenous Ainu
IV Buraku liberation issues
V Zainichi Koreans
  1 Nationality and name issues
  2 Generational change and internal diversity
  3 Advancement and backlash
VI Immigrant workers
VII Deconstructing the Japanese
VIII Problems and pitfalls
IX Japan beyond Japan
X Conclusion
Research questions
Further readings
Online resources

Chapter 9 The establishment: competition and collusion
I Introduction
II The three-way deadlock
III The dominance of the public bureaucracy
  1 Regulatory control
  2 Amakudari
  3 Administrative guidance
IV Two competing political economies
  1 The business community’s push for deregulation
  2 Privatization of public enterprises
  3 Globalism versus nationalism
V Interest groups in support of the LDP
VI The challenges of reforming political culture
  1 Heavy reliance on the bureaucracy
  2 Money politics and its social basis
  3 Local politics against the national bureaucracy
VII The case of Fukushima: collusive center and civil defiance
  1 TEPCO and the nuclear village
  2 Manipulation of hardship on the periphery
Chapter 10 Religion: belief and secularization

I Introduction

II Traditional religions
  1 Shinto
  2 Buddhism
  3 Christianity

III New religions
  1 The expansion of new religions
  2 Spirituality movements

IV Aspects of this-worldliness
  1 Worshippers’ earthly expectations
  2 Religion as business
  3 Religion and the state

V Revitalization amid secularization

VI Conclusion

Research questions
Further readings
Online resources

Chapter 11 Culture: the popular and the cool

I Introduction

II The two dualities of Japanese culture
  1 Elite versus popular culture
  2 Traditional versus imported culture

III Mass culture
  1 Entertainment media
  2 Cost-effective diversions
  3 Cross-status cultural consumption

IV Folk culture
  1 Local festivals as occasions of hare
  2 Regional variation of folk culture
  3 Marginal art
Chapter 12 Civil society: activism and friendly authoritarianism

I Introduction
II The fragmentation of social relations
III Post-Fukushima protest movements
  1 Demonstrations on the streets
  2 Characteristics of participants
  3 Social segment effects
IV Volunteers, NPOs, NGOs, and resident movements
  1 Volunteers
  2 NPOs and NGOs
  3 The prevalence of resident movements
  4 Three-dimensional typology
  5 Interest groups
V Seikatsusha as an emic concept of citizens
VI Friendly authoritarianism
  1 Mutual surveillance within small groups
  2 Visible and tangible power
  3 Manipulation of ambiguity
  4 Moralizing and mind correctness
VII Conclusion

References
Index
Figures, tables, and theme boxes

Figures

1.1 Map of Japan
1.2 Hiroshima Castle
2.1 Takeshita Dōri Street, Tokyo
3.1 Factory worker
3.2 Status-consistent and status-inconsistent clusters
3.3 Changes in the Gini indices over time
4.1 Senior citizens jogging together
4.2 Adults and children in an air-raid shelter, 1943
5.1 Commuters at Umeda Subway Station in Osaka
5.2 Skilled blue-collar worker
5.3 Changes in the unionization rate and strike numbers, 1947–2018
6.1 Disparities of age-based wages among male and female employees, 2018
6.2 High-school students taking an examination
6.3 School children doing radio calisthenics
7.1 Workforce participation is growing across a range of industries
7.2 Age-based female labor participation rates, 1985–2017
7.3 Businesswomen exchanging business cards
7.4 Numbers of households with a full-time housewife and two-income households, 1980–2018
8.1 Popo dolls
8.2 Pyramid showing definitions of ‘the Japanese’
9.1 Three-way rivalry among power centers
9.2 National Diet Building, Tokyo
9.3 Bullet train
9.4 Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Station
10.1 Traditional Bon dancing
10.2 Stone statues of jizō
10.3 Child on Shichi-go-san
11.1 Akihabara, Tokyo
12.1 Anti-government demonstration, 2015

Tables

1.1 Condensed chronology of historical turning points
1.2 Changing geopolitical centers
1.3 Snapshot of expansionary attempts
2.1 Population distribution, 2010–20
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Relative sizes of ethnic and pseudo-ethnic minorities in Japan and selected countries</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Relative Gini indices of Japan and selected OECD countries, 2015–16</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Relative poverty rates in Japan and selected OECD countries, 2016</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Comparison of societal models</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 ‘Which words represent the characteristics of the Japanese?’ Survey responses, 1958–2013</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Japanese studies in English-language publications: fluctuations in frameworks and analytical tools, 1945–2020</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Comparison of convergence debate theses</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Comparison of subcultural dimensions: Japan and Germany</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 ‘To which social class do you belong?’ Japanese survey responses, 1965–2018</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 ‘To which social class do you belong?’ Relative survey responses for Japan and selected other countries, 2005–6</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Class distribution, based on Hashimoto’s model of Marxian categories, 2012</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Comparison of major classes</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Population composition, based on Kikkawa’s eight segments, 2015</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Comparison of status-consistent and status-inconsistent classes, 2010</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Distribution of financial assets, 2017</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Intraclass and interclass marriages, 2015</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 Marriages in terms of partner’s educational background, 2005</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Comparison of four generations born in the twentieth century</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 ‘Which is the most congenial lifestyle?’ Survey responses, 1930–2013</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Comparison of village structures in eastern and western Japan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Distribution of private sector firms and employees, by firm size, 2016</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Comparison of large and small firms</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Comparison of small-business types</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Comparison of management models</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Comparison of types of capitalism</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Distribution of employees in private sphere megasectors, 2016</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Unionization rates, by firm size, 2018</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Distribution of final education levels, 2010</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 Distribution of high-school student population after graduation, 2018</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 Participation rates in learning English as self-education, 2016</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Comparison of educational orientations</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Positions of power held by women, 2016–19</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Comparison of permeations into the lives of married women</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Distribution of household types, 1980–2015</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4 Comparison of family types</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1 ‘Do you think the Japanese are superior or inferior to Westerners?’ Survey responses, 1953–2013</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Comparison of minority groups</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Comparison of types of buraku communities</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xvi | Figures, tables, and theme boxes

8.4 Comparison of identity orientations of zainichi Korean youth 212
8.5 Distribution of class positions of Japanese nationals and of zainichi Koreans, 1995 214
8.6 Comparison of Japanese markers 220
8.7 ‘How important are certain criteria for determining “Japaneseness”?’ Survey responses, 2003 223
8.8 Comparison of types of national identities, 2003 223
9.1 Comparison of political economies 237
9.2 Comparison of major power players’ orientations 250
11.1 ‘Of which Japanese cultures can Japan be proud?’ Survey responses, 2009 284
11.2 ‘Which categories of cultural or artistic activities did you appreciate in the past year?’ Survey responses, 2019 285
11.3 Comparison of types of cultures 286
11.4 Comparison of types of popular culture 287
11.5 Types of marginal arts 296
11.6 Comparison of three phases in popular images of Japan abroad and predominant paradigms of Japanese studies 304
12.1 Changes in affiliations to voluntary associations, 1986–2017 316
12.2 Comparison between contemporary social movements and the Ampo struggle in 1960 321
12.3 Comparison of types of voluntary organizations 327
12.4 Comparison of types of interest groups 329
12.5 Comparison of emic conceptions of social relations 340
12.6 Comparison of strategies for moral indoctrination 342
12.7 Comparison of types of friendly authoritarianism 343

Theme boxes

Chinese influence on early Japan 8
Samurai loyalty to feudal lords 13
Life in Edo 16
Challenges of introductory images 38
Class impact on socialization 62
Homelessness 69
The advent of aging society 85
Memories of the wartime generation 90
Young generation’s choices 95
Towards work-style reform 118
Long working hours 121
Emphasis on collective integration 151
School lunch as part of education 153
Hikikomori sufferers 158
Career women 182
Variations in gender identity 195
The Sayama case 207
Exploitation of foreign workers 218
Three 'non-Japanese' Japanese 221
Nippon Kaigi 242
Reiwa Shinsengumi 244
Okinawa and the US military bases 248
In the wake of Fukushima 255
The royal family 261
Different but coexistent: Shinto and Buddhism 269
'Where should my ashes go after death?' 280
Diversity in Japan's popular culture 303
Land of manga 309
Enduring demonstrations in Tokyo 321
Equality of opportunity and institutional sexism 341
Preface to the fifth edition

It is now nearly a quarter of a century since the first edition of this book was published, in 1997. I initially wrote it less as a primer for students beginning Japanese studies than as a scholarly challenge to the prevailing discourse that defined Japanese society as uniquely monocultural. With the passing of time, Japanese society is increasingly regarded as multicultural, fraught with cultural diversity and class competition, and I am pleased to see that the book has not only stood the test of time but also contributed in a small way to the ongoing paradigm shift.

I felt that it was time for the book to be thoroughly refurbished for use as a textbook by a broader readership, including those new to studying Japanese society in higher education and beyond. Readers of the last four editions will notice that the fifth edition is more user-friendly and multidimensional. It has links to videos and websites, lists of questions for research and discussion, and photos and case studies, features which the previous versions did not have. To extend the coverage of the book, I have introduced two new chapters, on history and religion, in addition to comprehensively updating the narratives, tables, and figures of the preexisting chapters.

The COVID-19 crisis emerged as the book was being prepared for press. Should another edition be available in the future, it will fully discuss the impact of the 2020 pandemic on Japanese society, as by then social science data and studies about its repercussions will be available.

This is not a book which I could produce single-handedly. I am immensely grateful to Tanya Bastrakova and Penny Mansley for their outstanding editorial assistance at different phases of the revision. Their judicious, constructive, and professional advice helped me improve the book greatly. I would also like to note that I have drawn inspiration from countless daily conversations I have had for decades with my partner, Machiko Sato, at the dinner table, while driving our car, and while taking walks together. Some of my old friends will observe her intellectual influence on this work.

Completing the fifth edition, I again feel a sense of liberation and hope that readers will share some of my delight in analyzing and reanalyzing the unresolved debates and pending issues raised in this book.

Yoshio Sugimoto
Melbourne
May 2020
Acknowledgements

The author and Cambridge University Press would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce material in this book.

**Figure 1.2**: © Getty Images/moaan; **2.1**: © Getty Images/Pola Damonte via Getty Images; **3.1**: © Getty Images/Michael H; **4.1**: © Getty Images/Taiyou Nomachi; **4.2**: Wikimedia Commons/Shigeru Tamura; **5.1**: © Getty Images/Robert Essel; **5.2**: © Getty Images/Trevor Williams; **6.2**: © Getty Images/ferrantraite; **6.3**: © Getty Images/Kasei; **7.1 (left)**: © Getty Images/Taiyou Nomachi; **7.1 (right)**: © Getty Images/iryouchin; **7.3**: © Getty Images/SetsukoN; **8.1**: © Getty Images/electravk; **9.2**: © Getty Images/fotoVoyager; **9.3**: © Getty Images/sot; **9.4**: © Getty Images/Taro Hama @ e-kamakura; **10.1**: By Flickr user Guilhem Vellut, ‘Tsukiji Honganju Bon Dance Festival’, www.flickr.com/photos/o_0/9434414142/, licensed under CC BY 2.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/; **10.2**: © Getty Images/I am happy taking photographs.; **10.3**: © Getty Images/kohei_hara; **11.1**: © Getty Images/Marco Bottigelli.

**Chapter 9**: Discussion adapted from Sugimoto 2011 licensed under CC BY-ND 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/. Available from The Conversation at https://theconversation.com/japans-fatigued-corporate-culture-414.

All videos cited in the theme boxes are hosted on YouTube; these and websites cited in ‘Online resources’ sections were accessed on 30 April 2020.

*Every effort has been made to trace and acknowledge copyright. The publisher apologizes for any accidental infringement and welcomes information that would redress this situation.*