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Yoshio Sugimoto
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An illustration in the top right corner of the cover features various elements of Japanese society and culture. It includes a traditional Japanese torii gate, a modern skyscraper, a person in a kimono, a person in a school uniform, and a person in a business suit. There are also stylized clouds and a small boat.

AN INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE SOCIETY

FIFTH
EDITION

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.

Written in a lively and engaging style, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* remains essential reading for all students of Japanese society.

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

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**YOSHIO
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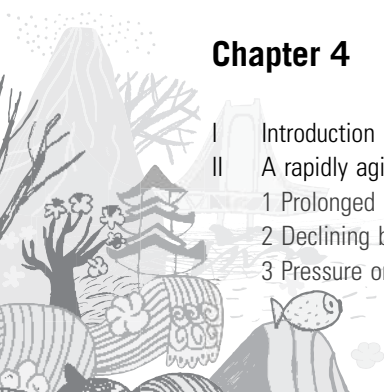
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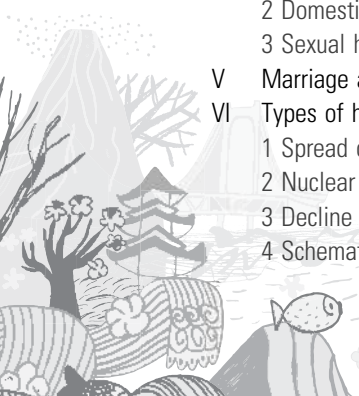
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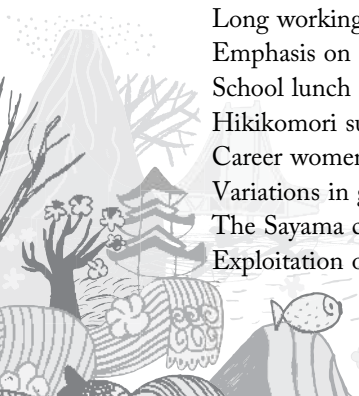
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Preface to the fifth edition

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



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