

Editorial Preface

This book is the third volume on sociological and psychological aspects of ongoing development in Japan and Germany. These volumes are the result of activities of the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences (*Nichidoku-Shakaikagaku-Gakkai*). One purpose of this international society is to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from Japan and Germany, including psychologists and sociologists, to discuss problems related to ongoing change in Japan, Germany, and other highly industrialized societies from a comparative perspective. While the scientific analyses of problems in industrial societies often deal with economic, political, and sometimes historical topics, here, the socio-cultural and psychological aspects are focused upon. The society's biannual conferences aim (1) to discuss existing knowledge on phenomena of modernization and social change in Japan from a comparative perspective, and (2) to define problems and critical issues for the analyses of possible transitions in Japan. The last conference was held in Konstanz. The present publication is based on this conference. We have to express our thanks to the University of Konstanz for supporting the conference. Furthermore, we gratefully acknowledge financial support for the conference and the preparation of the present volume by the Japan Foundation, the Japanese Consulate General, Munich, and the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences.

Past research on changes in Japan was mostly focused on the question of modernization and specific conditions for the rapid economic development there. However, it has become obvious in the meantime that significant changes are presently going on in Japan which have a quality other than the building of a highly industrialized society. Technological and economic development are only partial aspects of this process of significant changes in the Japanese and other industrialized societies. Social change is a phenomenon which takes place on many levels and has implications for many domains of society, including social, cultural, and psychological aspects. Culture-specific variations of phenomena and processes of social change should preferably be clarified by taking a comparative view and by making use of the expertise of scholars from different cultures.

Therefore the presentations and discussions at this conference were based on an interdisciplinary approach, focusing on sociological and psychological aspects of transition in Japan, partly in comparison with other western societies, especially Germany. Some of these presentations were selected to be included in this volume aiming to broaden the perspective on problems of social change and more fundamental transitions in Japan. Some contributions can be seen as an example for cultural differences, also in regard to scientific customs. Therefore not all contributions reflect the preferred mode of presentation of the editors. They were nevertheless included in this volume since even these specific differences may be seen as informative for a cross-cultural approach. We believe that a critical evaluation of these views may stimulate more refined analyses. The book aims to foster an interdiscipli-

nary and a broader approach to the study of social change and also to stimulate theoretical conceptualizations and empirical knowledge on transitions in Japan.

We thank the contributors to this volume and gratefully acknowledge the valuable impact of the discussants at the conference. We were privileged to have as discussants Folker Streib and Yasusada Yawata who illuminated the economic factors of transitions in Japan from a national and international perspective. We are indebted to Marion Hessel-Scherf and Tamara Herz who helped in organizing the conference, and to Boris Mayer who helped in preparing the present volume in a variety of ways. Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the staff of Pabst Science Publishers and the support of Wolfgang Pabst.

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