

SOCIAL CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN: Structures, Sorting and Strategies. Edited by *Hiroshi Ishida and David H. Slater.* London and New York: Routledge, 2010. xviii, 243 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$150.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-415-47475-7.

Drastic socioeconomic changes following from the ongoing recession have brought about a shift in self-view and academic discourse: Japan, seen as a homogeneous middle-class society for some thirty years, has in recent years been labeled a gap society (*kakusa shakai*), in which social inequalities along the lines of income, occupation, gender and race are becoming visible. This volume tackles the paradigm shift by analyzing contemporary Japanese society from the point of view of social class.

A broad definition of class is applied which transcends the traditional concept restricted to economic aspects and allows the linkage of class with social, cultural and political phenomena. In the introductory chapter, the editors Hiroshi Ishida and David H. Slater present their frame of reference, firmly based in theory, which makes possible an analysis of class dynamics that gives a general overview of processes of social stratification in contemporary Japan.

Based on this theoretical groundwork, the different authors map out class structures (part 1); analyze how these structures are reproduced by class selection (part 2); discuss class socialization and lifestyles (part 3); as well as addressing behavioral strategies in different social classes (part 4). The clear structure of the four subdivisions of the book helps underscore the overall argument. As the volume includes articles based on quantitative as well as qualitative methods, the reader can get an understanding of both macro-sociological processes and individual narratives.

To analyze aspects of class structure (part 1), Hiroshi Ishida investigates social mobility by looking at the relationship of socioeconomic resources and class location. The author concludes that in Japan, as in other advanced industrial countries, there is a strong propensity to class inheritance. Sawako Shirahase comes to a similar conclusion in her analysis of marriage patterns: both getting married as well as remaining single are connected to class origin and assist in reproducing class structure.

Considering processes of sorting and class closure (part 2), Takehiko Kariya and Mary C. Brinton analyze how changes in education policy and the economic situation have altered the hitherto strong link between school and the labour market. Both articles show how individuals are sorted into different classes through the transition from school to work.

Thematically closely linked to the previous section, the two articles in part 3 investigate socialization mechanisms through which class-based skills, attitudes and interests are formed and solidified. David H. Slater examines the role of formal education in middle and high school for class socialization within what he calls the “new working class,” whereas Amy Borovoy focuses

on the influence of changes in company training systems on the relative importance of skills acquired in different types of higher education.

The last part of the book, on “class strategies,” illuminates how patterns of behaviour can be traced back to class-based resources and attitudes. Aya Ezawa gives an account of gender ideals of single mothers and shows how their idea of being a “good mother” is closely connected to their initial class location. In her study on Peruvian migrants to Japan, Ayumi Takenaka turns to the intersection of ethnicity and finds that coming from a different class background back in Peru, migrants of Japanese and non-Japanese ancestry show different strategies of adaptation and status achievement when coming to Japan.

With its structured analysis of processes of class formation and reproduction based on recent original research by the authors, this book fills a gap in the current discourse on social stratification in contemporary Japan. In bringing together different areas and topics of class analysis, the book paints a broad and lively picture of Japanese society. At the same time, it points to areas in which further research is still needed, i.e., a more detailed investigation of aspects of the role of the state in creating new groups at the margins of society—one of which is discussed as the “new working class” by Slater.

This volume is a must-read for any scholar of contemporary Japan. It is highly recommendable as a class reader in seminars on Japanese society. The introductory chapter not only gives a comprehensive account of how the analysis of social structure in Japan has shifted in focus; it is also an excellent illustration of how to place an analysis within a clearly defined theoretical frame. The single articles are well-structured and profound in content as well as research method. This not only makes them an informative read but also good examples of academic analysis valuable to students (and researchers) in the fields of social sciences and ethnography.

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THE CULTURE OF COPYING IN JAPAN: Critical and Historical Perspectives. Edited by Rupert Cox. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. xii, 275 pp. (Tables, figures, B&W photos.) US\$150.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-415-30752-9.

The Culture of Copying in Japan: Critical and Historical Perspectives is a useful scholarly endeavour in a field of research that has not received as much attention in Japan Studies as comparable work in European or American studies. The book follows earlier publications on this topic, notably John Singleton’s edited *Learning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan* (1998) and Brenda G. Jordan and Victoria Weston’s edited *Copying the Master*