Nora Kottmann | Cornelia Reiher [eds.]

# Studying Japan

## Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods

Nomos

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# Foreword

'Anything goes, as long as it is relevant and convincing.' This guidance by my supervisor sounded like an invitation to confidently rely on my curiosity and creativity when doing research for my PhD back in the late 1980s. But I soon learned to translate the statement into 'Anything goes, as long as it complies with the rules.' The rules set by the academic community defined what was relevant and convincing. Methods form an integral part of this. They are the tools and rules of the trade of scholars: as tools they enhance our abilities to explore, test and verify, as rules they constrain what is acceptable.

German Japanese Studies mostly differs from the more traditional Japanology with regard to its focus on subjects beyond culture, literature and language. When the new academic community started to establish itself at German-speaking universities in the 1980s, it had no genuine methodology. Instead it borrowed from the so-called *Methodenfächer* (method subjects) like Sociology, Political Science or Economics. But how could methods developed by disciplines that favour theories which are abstract from time and space be usefully applied to academic enquiry interested in phenomena that are defined by specific time-space constellations, like the family in post-war Japan or Japanese firms in the 1990s?

Anthropology provides a solution as it offers a methodology which explicitly honours time-space contingencies, and some of the best research on Japan, like Ronald Dore's classic *British factory—Japanese factory* (1973), has been achieved by applying anthropological methods. However, not all issues in the realm of management, the economy, politics and society lend themselves to anthropological methods. So, scholars in the field of Japanese Studies continue to be confronted with the tension between research interests about phenomena specific to Japan and research methods not primarily concerned with specifics.

The handbook *Studying Japan* does not resolve this tension, but it does provide a pragmatic way of coping with it. And it does so in a comprehensive and systematic manner. By making the various methods of the Social Sciences accessible and by offering guidance on how to apply these tools and rules during the different stages of a research project, this handbook will prove highly valuable for those who study, teach and do research on Japan. Given its pluralistic approach, the handbook does not proclaim that there is only one right way to conduct research. It has no intention of being the *Bible of Japanese Studies*, but it certainly has the potential to become *The book of recipes* on how to make one's research both relevant and convincing.

The editors deserve both thanks and respect for taking up the challenge of embarking on this project as well as for what they already accomplished with the conference in 2019 and now with the timely publication of this handbook. The German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo is very happy and proud to have been part of this endeavour.

Franz Waldenberger
Director, German Institute for Japanese Studies
Tokyo, July 2020

## Intercultural research, methodology and the emerging space of transnational knowledge

When people from other corners of the world do qualitative research on Japanese contexts, they engage in an intercultural enterprise. I am not speaking of closed national cultures in terms of methodological nationalism. In this globalising world, the mass media, personal travel and capitalism have contributed to opening up and interlinking cultures: people in many places watch anime on the Internet, eat sushi of diverse quality and wear trousers produced by low-paid female workers from the Global South. But this has not resulted in a globalised, flattened world culture. Rather, cultures have been and are thriving as contradictory complex configurations of meaning and practices, and they blend elements from what is seen as home or far away.

In this sense, those not socialised in the Japanese context and language start on an intercultural tour when they decide to do research on social or cultural issues focusing on Japan. This approach of intercultural interaction, communication and interpretation can bring new perspectives to the study of Japan, which of course is already comprehensively covered by Japanese researchers. This book is a detailed, diverse and extremely useful travel guide and companion on the road to reflexive and successful intercultural research in and on Japan. I want to congratulate the editors for this constructive and timely collection. They belong to the middle generation of researchers and thus show rich expertise in identifying and handling the various challenges of qualitative research on Japan. Like other pioneers in Germany, I had to find my way through the confusion, traps and thickets on this road mainly on my own with some support from advisors in Japan and elsewhere, when researching gender in industrialisation and later in industrial computerisation in Japan from the 1970s. Therefore, I find it extremely gratifying that younger generations can refer to this compendium on the why, how and where of doing research in Japan.

Let me go on with the why, how and where: intercultural and transcultural research is an urgent issue for Cultural and Social Sciences in globalisation (Gerharz 2021; Rosenthal 2018). However, it is charged with tensions which are also present in the national context but less visible. Let me touch on some basic issues while drawing on the rich suggestions from the articles in this volume.

The first is the relationship between the researcher and the researched subjects: the main aim of qualitative research is to bring to light and to interpret how *actors as subjects* see and construct sociocultural contexts and themselves (Rosenthal 2018). As researchers often used to see themselves as the main subjects of their projects, this creates tensions which have been debated as the representation problem or crisis in intercultural research (Gerharz 2021). Researchers and actors enter interactions in qualitative research as a *process of cocreation* (see Bruman, Ch. 7.1). As many contributors highlight in this handbook, (self-)reflexivity is an indispensable compass or everyday eyeglasses for researchers on the intercultural research road. They need to reflect on their own interest in the research issue and on the interaction, including its ethical and power dimensions. How am I 'pre-formed' and pre-informed by my social position ac-

cording to class, gender, minority/majority status or world region? Researching about gender in education, will I ask only women or also men or queer people? And will I interview migrant men and women as well as 'ethnic Japanese'? So researchers have to reflect on whom they include or exclude through their concepts (e.g. of gender) and selection of interview partners. This also applies to interpretation: Will I accept the fact that mothers make lunchboxes (*bentō*) for school children as something natural (as some interviewed mothers might say) or will I look for contradictions and ambivalences in the interview texts? Researchers do not have to belong to the group they do research on; the contributions in this volume rather suggest that crossing borders of age, gender or nationality may add value to both the interviewer and the interviewed. But they will have to reflect on their own position, experiences and potential power.

The second issue are the hermeneutic dynamics in qualitative cocreated research or how to create and interpret meanings in an intercultural process. The first obvious barrier is the Japanese language, which in my view can be only overcome by using it. Expert interviews with international actors may be done in English or German. But for interpretative qualitative research this may not work. Having tried it at the request of my interview partners, I found that at least the semantics are different in the end and thus qualitative substance may suffer. Also, many Japanese appreciate the outside researcher taking the trouble to learn their language, with the result that the interview situation becomes more like an everyday interaction.

But reflexivity is also needed in intercultural qualitative research as a continuous exchange process of meaning between cultures or intercultural hermeneutical dialectics. In which ways can researchers craft their theoretical and empirical framework so that it does not follow Eurocentric (or 'Nipponcentric') codes and is open to articulation and interpretation by the actors? Asking why mothers make a *bentō*-box for schoolchildren makes sense in Japan but not so much in Germany, and may also involve new stereotyping. Doing research on *otaku*, would one translate the term and look for English equivalents or start from the fact that it is now an international term explained in various national Wikipedias? Referring to these examples, I want to argue that intercultural hermeneutical dialectics are not simply a matter of translation but rather of reflecting the ongoing cocreation of meanings between researchers and actors/research subjects. Doing intercultural qualitative research in Japan implies that the actors articulate their meanings and constructions and have an open space for this. The researchers will have to understand these meanings and then go beyond them in their own interpretation, while keeping the trust of their interview partners.

Intercultural qualitative research in this sense is evolving in many world regions. Thus, new spaces of transnational knowledge creation are emerging (Gerharz 2021) and Area Studies like Japanese Studies can play a key role in this. Let me raise some questions to conclude: Will these spaces still be centred on Japanese Studies outside Japan and research inside Japan? Or will mainstream Cultural or Social Sciences in the 'West' overcome their tendency towards exoticising or singularising Japan and (finally) join in creating these spaces, thus opening themselves up to comparative and reflexive universal research (Lenz 2013)? With more intercultural research covering shared problems, will the circulation of knowledge still be a one-way road

between 'the West' and Japan or become a truly transnational exchange (see, for example, Ochiai 2012–)? And how will the emerging transnational academic spaces recognise and negotiate the deep inequalities in the postcolonial world of academia?

Ilse Lenz
Professor Emerita of Sociology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Berlin, July 2020

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A lot of inspiration emerged from discussing methods and the handbook with our students. We thank all students who participated in our method courses at FUB, HHU and Musashi University. FUB students' suggestions for the structure and content of this handbook were presented by Thora Singer and Egor Skripkin to the chapter authors during the conference 'Studying Japan: The impact of transnationalisation and technological innovation on methods, fieldwork and research ethics' in July 2019 in Berlin. At the same conference, Susanne Auerbach, Andreas Eder-Ramsauer and Jan Niggemeier presented PhD students' expectations of what a method handbook for the study of Japan should look like. They inspired many authors to think more about their audience and to reconsider the structure of their chapters.

We are greatly indebted to Karin Klose, Brigitte Peek and Thomas Weitner at FUB and Joachim Röhr at the DIJ for their administrative support of the conference. We also thank Andreas Steinhöfel for the wonderful design of the poster and the flyer. Without the commitment and great help by FUB's student assistants Antonya Schmidt, Maria Natalia Seidel-Hirose, Julia Süße and Toby Wolf and DIJ interns Isabel Schreiber and Marie Ulrich the conference would not have been possible. We also thank the German Research Foundation (DFG), the DIJ, FUB's Ernst Reuter Society and the Gender Equality Fund at the Department of History and Cultural Studies at FUB for their financial support.

After the conference, we were tasked with writing our own chapters, collecting the contributions, editing and formatting manuscripts. For their invaluable help during this process, we cannot thank Marie Ulrich and Isabel Schreiber enough. We are extremely happy and grateful that they both agreed to keep on working with us after their internships to finish the project

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Nora Kottmann and Cornelia Reiher
Berlin and Tokyo, August 2020

# Introduction: Studying Japan

*Nora Kottmann and Cornelia Reiher*

## 1. Introduction

The handbook *Studying Japan* emerged—just like any good research project does—from a puzzle. In 2016, we were both teaching in Japanese Studies programmes at German universities where methodological training is often squeezed into the curricula here and there, but generally not taught in a systematic manner. In our courses, we were often confronted with questions from students such as 'How do I start my research?', 'Which methods suit which research questions and designs?', 'How should I conduct my research?' or 'What should I do with my data?' This made us wonder how we could teach Social Science research methods to students who want to conduct research in or on Japan in a more systematic way. Lacking a comprehensive handbook on the methods of Social Science research on Japan that we or our students could use in class, we started to think about what such a handbook could and should look like and eventually decided to create one ourselves. Now, more than four years later and after countless discussions, millions of Skype calls, two conferences and numerous encounters with our authors, we are very proud to write this introduction to just such a handbook.

For us, this handbook is a milestone that began with (still ongoing) discussions on methodology in Japan(ese) Studies over the course of sharing our experiences teaching research methods to Japanese Studies students at Freie Universität Berlin and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. From these conversations emerged a joint teaching project of (method) courses focusing on Japanese foodscapes in Berlin and Düsseldorf, which resulted in a conference in Berlin in 2017 where students from both universities presented their projects and discussed method education with scholars from Berlin, Düsseldorf and Japan (Reiher 2018a). Around that time, we first talked about the idea of creating a method handbook for a Japanese Studies audience, and in early 2018 we wrote a book proposal and began to recruit authors. From the very start we were (and still are) overwhelmed by the positive feedback from colleagues and everybody else we talked to about this project. We soon realised that there was so much material to discuss with regard to methodological challenges and the method handbook that we decided to invite the authors of each chapter to Berlin for a conference in the summer of 2019. Discussions with the authors substantially shaped some of the common threads that run through almost all chapters of this book: 1. What is specific to research on and in Japan? 2. How do transnational entanglements change the study of Japan? 3. How do technological innovations enable and challenge research on Japan? and 4. What are the ethical implications when studying Japan? This handbook is a collaborative effort, and we are grateful to everyone who supported it.

## 2. Why this handbook and why now?

Why is a handbook of qualitative Social Science research methods for the study of Japan necessary at all, and particularly at this point in time? There are wonderful books on Social Science methods, fieldwork and research designs on the market and for Japan(ese) Studies, the volume *Doing fieldwork in Japan*, edited by Theodore Bestor, Patricia Steinhoff and Victoria Lyon-Bestor (2003), is certainly the most influential.[1] It is widely used by those who plan to or are already conducting fieldwork in Japan. Some other edited volumes or special journal issues have addressed issues related to fieldwork and to ethnography, in particular, in Japan such as reflexivity, responsibility and fieldwork ethics (Alexy/Cook 2019; Furukawa 2007; Hendry/Wong 2009; Linhart et al. 1994; Reiher 2018b; Robertson 2007). Very few discuss data analysis (Kobayashi 2010; Shimada 2008). Several individual contributions primarily address fieldwork, fieldwork ethics and ethnography in Japan (Aldrich 2009; Gill 2014; Hendry 2015; McLaughlin 2010; Numazaki 2012; Yamashita 2012). Yet, despite the valuable publications this handbook builds on and is indebted to, there is, at least to our knowledge, no comprehensive and coherent handbook on the study of Japan that addresses the whole research process from the first idea to the publication of findings, explains and discusses the most common methods in Social Science research in and on Japan in a 'how-to' manner and can be used by students, researchers and teachers alike. Therefore, one motivation for putting this handbook together is to offer a starting point for learning and teaching methods as well as research designs in a Japanese Studies context and beyond.

In addition to this relatively pragmatic reason, there are, however, three more reasons why we consider this handbook necessary and timely. First, there is an increasing demand for systematic and transparent research practices in Japanese and Area Studies communities against the backdrop of the increasing marginalisation of Area Studies in academia, particularly in Europe (Basedau/Köllner 2007; Ben-Ari 2020).[2] Secondly, the transnationalisation of Japanese Studies as a research field, of Japan as its research subject and of research teams requires researchers to rethink traditional national and disciplinary boundaries. Thirdly, technological innovations provide new and exciting opportunities for research, yet also pose various challenges, including in regard to ethical questions. This handbook is our attempt to address and discuss these and further developments with scholars around the world and contribute to respective methodological discussions. We believe that it is important to strengthen international and interdisciplinary exchange and discussion about how students and scholars of Japan can best conduct research in a transparent and ethical way and produce reliable, comparable and comprehensive research results that scholars from Area Studies and Social Science disciplines alike can relate to.

1 There are many Social Science method books focusing on a range of topics. Thus, in this handbook's individual chapters, the authors give recommendations and introduce handbooks on the respective topics. Of course, there is also a great variety of method books in Japanese (see, for example, Kishi et al. 2016). We would also like to mention two edited volumes that explicitly address teaching in/for Japan(ese) Studies in a Japanese and a global context, namely Gaitanidis et al. (2020) and Shamoon/McMorran (2016).

2 For an ongoing, interactive discussion on the topic, see Curtis (2020). For an early contribution on the positioning of Japanology in the Social Sciences in a German context, see Lenz (1996) and Seifert (1994).

## 3. What this handbook is about

*Studying Japan* mainly targets (PhD) students and researchers who plan to draw on qualitative Social Science methods to conduct research on Japan. It also offers a handy tool for colleagues who teach courses on fieldwork, research designs and methods or want to address specific methodological issues in class in order to prepare their students to conduct their own research projects and write theses. This handbook is about qualitative Social Science research on Japan, focusing on the entire research process that begins with a vague interest in a research topic, which is then developed into a research question and eventually leads to findings presented in a thesis, an article or a book. Since the study of Japan is an interdisciplinary field, research focusing on Japan's society, politics, culture, economy and history draws on a wide variety of theories and methods from various disciplines. Therefore, throughout this handbook the authors present insights from Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology and History, but also address several recurring themes and challenges.

One challenge for both Japanese Studies and Area Studies scholars has been the translation of methods developed in other disciplines (mostly in the West) to specific (often non-Western) field sites and research subjects. One could argue that these translation processes are part of every research project, where methods have to be adjusted to a specific field site or a researcher's skills or resources. However, there are some issues that are particular to the study of Japan in and outside the country. The most obvious is language. Translation of Japanese sources and data as well as cultural norms is the task of every Japan researcher, regardless of their nationality. Therefore, it is important to be reflexive regarding one's own positionality, the reciprocity of trust-relations (Takeda 2013), the ways sensitive issues are handled or conventions for encounters in the field.

At the same time, an increasing focus on transnational entanglements, mobilities and processes (not only) in Japan-related research challenges traditional national and disciplinary boundaries (Soysal 2016). This implies that research on Japan is not only carried out in Japan anymore (Adachi 2006; Aoyama 2015; Kottmann 2020). It also means that it is important to contextualise findings on Japan in a global context, no matter if a researcher studies Japan's transnational entanglements or compares Japan with other countries.[3] In addition, an increasing focus on the transnationalisation of cultural, social and political phenomena in and beyond Japan involves several methodological challenges. For example, researchers may need to visit multiple sites or be able to conduct multilingual case studies within Japan (Arrington 2016; Avenell 2015; Farrer 2015). Furthermore, the research enterprise itself has become more transnational. In addition to cooperation across the boundaries of individual Area Studies (Middell 2018), research teams are increasingly international and interdisciplinary. This provides new opportunities, but also poses questions with regard to languages, institutional differences or divergent ethical requirements.

Transnational collaboration is often enabled through recent technological innovations ranging from online communication tools to software for data analysis or data repositories. Technological innovations provide new tools for getting in touch with informants via social media,

3 For an ongoing discussion on comparisons in Japan(ese) Studies and Area Studies, see Sidaway/Waldenberger (2020).

accessing data online, making large sets of data available for other researchers or a public audience or coordinating an international research team. In fact, this very handbook would not have been possible without tools for online communication and for storing data online! But these new technologies also pose challenges to researchers studying Japan and require them to develop new strategies for research. They create new types of reciprocity and demand attention is paid to the impact of social media in the whole research process online and offline (Baker 2013; Danley 2018; Gerster 2018; Postill/Pink 2012).

Not only do translation processes have (new) ethical implications, but so does the transnationalisation of Japan research and technological innovations. In fact, ethical issues are of high relevance during the whole research process, ranging from the originality of research questions to ensuring fairness in publishing. While these issues pop up in almost all chapters, we devote a separate chapter to the topic to stress the importance of good research practices, academic integrity and research ethics, such as properly quoting sources, ensuring fairness and respect to research participants and colleagues, and protecting the privacy of interviewees.

## 4. Editorial decisions

This handbook offers a large number of contributions on a variety of topics, but we are aware that we cannot cover everything there is to say about methods and methodology in the study of Japan. Thus, we had to make a number of decisions to limit this handbook's scope, including the level of detail in the chapters, author selection and the format of the handbook. One choice we made was to focus on qualitative methods because these are the methods we are most familiar with and which our students are most likely to use. Another was to only write short overviews for each topic in the main chapters, although much more could have been said about each of them. To account for this, we provide further reading for those who would like to know more about the specific topics as well as to connect the literature on research design, fieldwork and methods from the Social Science disciplines with the study of Japan.

Selecting contributing authors for the handbook was a more difficult process. We planned the handbook as an international collaborative project and sought to balance contributions with regard to disciplines, nationality, gender and career level, but because of our own academic background and the context from which this handbook emerged, many of the handbook's authors are food, family and gender scholars, and a significant number were educated and/or work in Germany. Nonetheless, we offer interdisciplinary perspectives on each topic, and the handbook unites contributions by anthropologists, political scientists, sociologists and (fewer) historians. In short, the more than 70 selected authors whose contributions are featured in this handbook do not represent the full spectrum of Social Science research on Japan, but rather this selection reflects our own positionality in the field. We are, of course, aware that there are many more wonderful Japan scholars in the world!

Finally, and despite a variety of technological innovations, we decided to publish this handbook as a physical, and therefore static, book that might be quickly partly outdated, especially the information on social media, websites and technological tools. Why did we choose a static format like a printed book? The short answer is: we love books and we are sure that at least

some information will remain pertinent. We imagine students and researchers carrying this handbook to Japan and back and having it at hand when they need it, even when there is no internet connection available. Despite these parochial and romanticised ideas about books, we are planning to enhance the printed version of the handbook with a website that features more information on methods and will be updated on a regular basis.[4]

## 5. How to use this handbook

This handbook offers a starting point for learning, teaching and applying methods in a Japan(ese) Studies context and beyond. It is structured in such a way that it can be used for (self-)studying and teaching alike. The handbook could be utilised for comprehensive reading in order to gain an overview of qualitative methods in Social Science research on Japan as well as to structure one-term method courses. Yet, the handbook's seventeen chapters can also be read individually; they can be used to learn about a specific method of data collection or analysis, expand one's knowledge, familiarise oneself with a certain topic or just look up specific information. In addition, the individual chapters can be applied to courses as and when required.

The handbook covers the entire research process in seventeen chapters from the outset to the completion of a thesis, paper or book. While this structure and the 'how-to' style might suggest that the research process consists of neatly separated steps, in reality, this is not the case. We are aware that the research process is often circular and dynamic and that the individual steps are often not carried out one after another in a linear manner, but sometimes even in reverse order. The blurred boundaries between the different tasks and steps in the research process are also addressed in the individual chapters. Yet due to the limitations of a book, which only allows for linear narration, as well as for reasons of clarity, this handbook is structured to follow the steps of the research process as they are most commonly organised.

The seventeen chapters are all structured in a similar and easy-to-access format: a chapter introduction ('main chapter') and three short essays with further reading and a joint reference list. The main chapters feature an introduction to key ideas, concepts and practices, point out key terms, address the most important problems and the strategies that can be employed to solve them, present selected case studies and offer further up-to-date reading. While the main chapters address the respective topics in a relatively general way, they always refer to the specific challenges and opportunities encountered when doing research on and/or in Japan. Three short essays written by senior and junior researchers in Japan(ese) Studies from around the world follow the main chapters. There are a total of 51 essays, each offering insights into how

4 A number of smaller decisions were made related to gender-sensitive language, the order of Japanese names, the order of authors and the transcription of Japanese terms. With regard to gender, we decided to use 'she' or 'her' for female, male and other genders when the gender of the subjects is unclear. This is not meant to be exclusive, but rather to challenge old ways of thinking that took the use of masculine forms to refer to both genders for granted in academia. Japanese names are written in the following—and in Japan unusual—order of first name first and last name second. This is due to criticism from some of our Japanese authors, who did not want to be treated differently from the other authors. Therefore, we decided to deviate from the way of writing Japanese names normally practised in Japan(ese) Studies. In the case of more than one author, names are mentioned in alphabetical order. Japanese terms are romanised based on the modified Hepburn system.

individual scholars actually deal with their respective method in practice. The authors share their experiences, offer concrete advice on and precise insights into their fields of interest, and elaborate on their perspective(s) and individual way(s) of studying Japan both in and outside the country. Yet, the essays are not only illustrations of research experiences but also give insights into a wide range of topics in the study of Japan, including nuclear power plants, single women, families, food safety, Japan-China relations, condom use, social inequality, host clubs, party politics and agriculture. In so doing, the essays celebrate the diversity and plurality of scholarship on Japan. Furthermore, the essays show that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way of doing Japan research, but that research always reflects the researchers' positionality and that it is necessary to make thoughtful decisions and explain them well.

## 6. Structure and content of this handbook

The first four chapters set the context for Japan research and address fundamental steps that often take place at the beginning of the research process. In chapter 1, Roger Goodman provides an introduction to the diversity of Japanese Studies and to research on Japan in the Social Sciences. Against this backdrop, Goodman provides advice on finding a research topic and explains how a researcher's biography and theoretical (pre-)assumptions affect this choice. The importance of research questions as well as the actual process of finding and asking questions is the focus of chapter 2 by Gabriele Vogt. In chapter 3, Kaori Okano addresses (case study) research designs and touches upon the discussion of theory building and testing as well as inductive and deductive processes. Urs Matthias Zachmann discusses the importance of reviewing scholarly literature and the need to identify and position oneself in relevant debates in chapter 4. He also explains the challenge of balancing debates from Area Studies, the Social Sciences as well as debates from Japan.[5]

The subsequent chapters focus on data collection. Chapter 5 by Akiko Yoshida starts with an overview of the most common qualitative data collection methods used in Social Science research. Yoshida explains different types of methods and comparatively discusses their respective characteristics, which is followed by chapters that each introduce and discuss one specific method in more detail. Levi McLaughlin addresses fieldwork—physical and virtual as well as in and outside of Japan—in chapter 6, Nora Kottmann and Cornelia Reiher introduce and discuss the world of qualitative interviews in chapter 7 and Christian Tagsold and Katrin Ullmann elaborate on observational research with a focus on participant observation in chapter 8. Finally, in chapter 9, Theresia Berenike Peucker, Katja Schmidtpott and Cosima Wagner deal with the collection of written and visual sources in archives, libraries and Japanese online databases.[6]

5 The essays in these chapters are written by Verena Blechinger-Talcott (Ch. 1.1), Daniel P. Aldrich (Ch. 1.2), Joy Hendry (Ch. 1.3), Nicolas Sternsdorff-Cisterna (Ch. 2.1), Kenneth Mori McElwain (Ch. 2.2), David Chiavacci (Ch. 2.3), Lynne Nakano (Ch. 3.1), Jamie Coates (Ch. 3.2), Kay Shimizu (Ch. 3.3), Patricia Maclachlan (Ch. 4.1), Sonja Ganseforth (Ch. 4.2) and Gracia Liu-Farrer (Ch. 4.3).

6 The essays in these chapters are written by Emma E. Cook (Ch. 5.1), Karen Shire (Ch. 5.2), Barbara Holthus and Wolfram Manzenreiter (Ch. 5.3), Nana Okura Gagné (Ch. 6.1), James Farrer (Ch. 6.2), Hanno Jentzsch (Ch. 6.3), Christoph Brumann (Ch. 7.1), Tomiko Yamaguchi (Ch. 7.2), Allison Alexy (Ch. 7.3), Susanne Klien (Ch.

Chapter 10, by Carola Hommerich and Nora Kottmann, focuses on mixed methods research, and it connects the chapters on data collection and data analysis. It serves a somewhat special role, as it provides a basic introduction to key terms and concepts of *quantitative methods*. The chapters that follow are devoted to data analysis, which may occur during and/or after the data collection process. In chapter 11, David Chiavacci addresses the importance of data analysis for the whole research process, introduces the main analytical approaches and discusses the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. The subsequent chapters each address specific analytical methods. In chapter 12, Caitlin Meagher focuses on (modified) grounded theory designs, the process of coding, the development of concepts and, ultimately, theory. Following this, in chapter 13, Celeste Arrington introduces content and frame analysis, and discusses their similarities and differences as well as each method's strengths and weaknesses. In chapter 14, Andreas Eder-Ramsauer and Cornelia Reiher discuss various forms of discourse analysis, define basic concepts and explain individual steps in analysis.[7]

Finally, the last three chapters of the handbook deal with finishing one's research projects and address basic cross-cutting issues like ethics and writing. In chapter 15, Chris McMorran writes about the importance of successfully completing one's research project(s) despite the various obstacles in researchers' private and professional life. Furthermore, he encourages researchers to demystify the writing process. In chapter 16, Cornelia Reiher and Cosima Wagner address the importance of following good and fair research practices throughout the whole research process and introduce new trends, such as open scholarship. In the final chapter 17, James Farrer and Gracia Liu-Farrer introduce various oral and written forms of presenting one's findings for both an academic and a wider audience. In this context, the authors stress the importance of carefully thinking about the audience one wants to reach.[8]

Throughout the handbook, all the authors write as concretely as possible and in an easy-to-access manner. They summarise key points, highlight key issues, define key terms, include visual models, offer lists of important journals, provide links to important webpages and introduce helpful tools (digital and analogue). While all the authors write from their respective perspective—as novice or established researchers; as Japanese, European, Australian or American citizens; as sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, human geographers or economists; as people of a specific gender and age—they provide information that is helpful and applicable for students, researchers and colleagues from different national contexts and academic cultures.

8.1), Akiko Takeyama (Ch. 8.2), Swee-Lin Ho (Ch. 8.3), Katja Schmidtpott and Tino Schölz (Ch. 9.1), Sheldon Garon (Ch. 9.2) as well as Shinichi Aizawa and Daisuke Watanabe (Ch. 9.3).

7 The essays in these chapters are written by Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (Ch. 10.1), Laura Dales (Ch. 10.2), Jun Imai (Ch. 10.3), Katharina Hülsmann (Ch. 11.1), Genaro Castro-Vázquez (Ch. 11.2), Markus Heckel (Ch. 11.3), Nancy Rosenberger (Ch. 12.1), Celia Spoden (Ch. 12.2), Julia Gerster (Ch. 12.3), Anna Wiemann (Ch. 13.1), Emi Kinoshita (Ch. 13.2), Kai Schulze (Ch. 13.3), Annette Schad-Seifert (Ch. 14.1), Daniel White (Ch. 14.2) and Steffen Heinrich (Ch. 14.3).

8 The essays in these chapters are written by Aya H. Kimura (Ch. 15.1), Christian Tagsold (Ch. 15.2), Richard J. Samuels (Ch. 15.3), Isaac Gagné (Ch. 16.1), David H. Slater, Robin O'Day, Flavia Fulco and Noor Albazerbashi (Ch. 16.2), Christopher Gerteis (Ch. 16.3), Scott North (Ch. 17.1), Isabelle Prochaska-Meyer (Ch. 17.2) and Brigitte Steger (Ch. 17.3).

## 7. Summary and future perspectives

In a nutshell, the handbook *Studying Japan* provides an overview of and hands-on advice for the individual steps in the research process and discusses methodological opportunities and challenges brought about by the transnationalisation of research subjects, research practices and research groups as well as by technological innovations and the digital revolution, while paying attention to good research practice and ethics. It enables students and teachers to study, teach and apply methods and to develop research designs and strategies for fieldwork in Japan. The challenge of producing both an area-sensitive yet academically sound study is a problem not only for scholars and students of Japanese Studies but also for researchers from all Area Studies. Thus, this handbook is a valuable tool for both the international Japan(ese) Studies community as well as for all Area Studies scholars who take the local characteristics and languages of 'their' areas seriously. At the same time, scholars from the Social Sciences who plan to study Japan in more depth can use this book to engage with Japan more deeply.

We hope this handbook inspires further reflection on the conducting and teaching of research in and beyond Japan. We think that the discussion of the methodological and ethical challenges arising, in particular, from transnationalisation and technological innovations in Social Science research in and on Japan should be continued. We are looking forward to future discussions, possibly an interdisciplinary handbook on quantitative methods in the study of Japan and to enhancing this book through a website that could serve as a means to connect researchers internationally who would like to share their experiences of using and teaching methodology in a Japan(ese) Studies context. Meanwhile, we hope that you find this book useful in facilitating your research or teaching. It might help to keep in mind this advice: while there is no single 'right' or 'wrong' way of studying Japan, work as precisely and reliably as possible, be critical and pragmatic and, most importantly, have fun, follow your curiosity and don't lose your fascination with your research.

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# Chapter 1
# How to begin research: The diversity of Japanese Studies

*Roger Goodman*

## 1. Introduction

The single most important decision for any research project is where to start: what question to examine and how to address it. This chapter sets out some of the key processes that researchers should consciously and conscientiously go through in making these decisions and attempts to turn them into a set of explicit and transparent steps to help those who are about to begin their own research projects. These principles apply at any level, from an undergraduate dissertation through to a major new project by a senior professor. They are built around the very simple premise that, in all research projects, the researcher is the main research tool. Just as any workman needs to know their tools, the researcher of Japan needs to know themselves. This chapter, therefore, looks at the importance of interrogating the personal biography and theoretical assumptions that all researchers bring to their work *before* they decide upon a research topic and research puzzle. In doing so, it also provides a guide to reading research which has already been undertaken by others in any field of Japanese Studies, from Natural and Medical Sciences through to the Social Sciences and Humanities.[1]

## 2. The importance of personal biography

As the accounts by Daniel Aldrich, Verena Blechinger-Talcott and Joy Hendry in the essays following this chapter show, every research project starts with the researcher. We study—or we should study—things that we know about and things that interest us. We tend, however, to be very bad at acknowledging this fact. Until the 1970s, indeed, most social scientists failed to acknowledge in more than the most superficial way their own role in their studies. They felt that to do so was in some way not scientific. They presented themselves as objective researchers who collected data in a value free manner through robust methodologies which they then analysed using the latest theoretical models available.

1 The ideas in this paper were first explored when the author was looking for a topic for his doctoral thesis (Goodman 1984) and were developed in articles which reflected on the relationship between how that project and a number of subsequent projects were designed and the conclusions which were drawn from them (Goodman 1990a; 2000a; 2006).

From the late 1970s these assumptions of 'scientism' began to be challenged by what some called the 'reflexive turn' (O'Reilly 2009, pp. 187–93). Increasingly, not just social scientists but even medical and physical scientists began to realise that, consciously or unconsciously, they brought with them a personal perspective on an issue which might influence not only why but also how they asked a particular question and how this might indeed affect what they saw and concluded.[2]

By the mid-1980s, as 'reflexivity' increasingly became intertwined with various debates about 'post-modernism' in Social Science, some researchers began to question whether it was possible to examine anything objectively and whether every research project was nothing more than a reflection of the cultural and political prejudices of the individual researcher. To some extent, this denial of objective truth was linked to and pushed by those whose beliefs in the 'certainties' of Marxism had been crushed by the crumbling of the former Soviet Union. One response to this collapse in faith in the scientific method was to turn the researchers' microscope on to the researchers themselves. What did they discover about themselves as a result of looking at the other? Examples of this in the case of Japanese Studies can be seen in the works of Brian Moeran (1985), Matthews M. Hamabata (1990) and Dorinne Kondo (1990).[3]

Most researchers in the 1980s took a less extreme position which took into account three elements of any research project: the researcher, the research and the reader (Okely/Callaway 1992). They argued that it was sufficient to give the reader ample autobiographical information and a detailed account of how a project was set up to allow them to judge the research they produced against their background knowledge of the researcher.

What was some of the personal information which researchers felt was important to share in the case of research on Japan? **Gender** (as exemplified in Hendry's account, see this chapter, Ch. 1.3) was one. Women had a very different experience of Japan from men (Roberts 2003). Indeed, the fact that there are such strong gender divisions in Japan often leads to different forms of study, for example, with a tendency for men to study the public sphere and women the private sphere.

**Sexuality** was another variable which was increasingly made explicit in studies of Japan in the 1980s, as indeed it was elsewhere as the study of identity politics and gender more generally became a global focus for research. This was most clearly expressed by Western authors who felt that the public expression of their sexuality was important since they did not want to separate their sense of self (which included their sexual orientation) from their role (as a researcher). An explicit example of this is the autobiographical account by John W. Treat (1999), but the importance of sexuality in giving access to certain worlds in Japan is also acknowledged in the work of Mark J. McLelland (2000) and Wim Lunsing (2001), who were among the first scholars to provide deep ethnographic accounts of the experience and worldviews of homosexuals in Japan.

2 Different disciplines have their own key figures in the 'reflexive turn' movement, but history will probably suggest that the single most influential figure was Pierre Bourdieu and the single most influential book was his *Outline of a theory of practice* (1977) with its notion that all researchers need to 'objectify their own objectifications.' Other important figures in these debates were Mikhail Bhaktin, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault.

3 Ostensibly, Moeran's ethnography is on a rural community in Kyushu, Hamabata on family businesses and Kondo on small manufacturing firms in Tokyo. In practice, each of them is also an account of what they discovered about themselves through their encounters with Japan.

A variable which could be inferred from these personal accounts, though not always stated explicitly, is **age** (Smith 2003). This, of course, affects the researcher's ability to empathise with and access different generations of Japanese. Age, gender and sexuality, of course, all interact. If one accepts that Japan is still a very patriarchal and gerontocratic society (and the make-up of the Diet and company boards would suggest that it is), then there is an argument that young women make the best researchers since they are the most likely to have the basic categories of how Japanese society operates 'explained' ('mansplained?') to them. Older, more experienced male researchers may be expected to 'know' these things. The ideal scenario for a social scientist is to be 'patronised' since that is when people reveal what they think are the basic underlying assumptions of their worldview. This is one reason (along with, ironically, the fact that their Japanese is too good) why it is often more difficult for native anthropologists to undertake research on their own society than it is for foreigners (see Yamaguchi, Ch. 7.2).

At the end of the 1980s, Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner (1992) carried out an interesting project which explored the impact of national background on the way that overseas researchers approached the study of Japan. They argued that researchers with different nationalities and different ethnic backgrounds bring with them **'cultural baggage'** which impacts (generally unconsciously) on the type of questions they ask about Japan. North American scholars have a cultural predisposition when they look at Japanese society to focus on 'race', Koreans and Chinese on blood ties, Indians on minority and outcaste status, the Soviets (at the time) on collectivism, Germans on social democracy and the English on social class since these are the 'key' social variables in their own societies.[4]

Another issue which is rarely discussed in the personal introductions to accounts of Japan is **politics**, either personal or national. As Sheila Johnson (1975) has shown, the U.S. view of Japan between the 1940s and 1970s was largely determined by U.S. relations with China. That is almost certainly still the situation today. Further, within societies, right-wing commentators have generally had a more sympathetic view of Japan in the postwar period—because of its economic success and high levels of social stability—than left-wing commentators, who have been concerned about the lack of national unions to protect and fight for workers' rights.

## 3. Interrogating the relationship between the person and society

The above are all personal biographical details which may be pertinent to understanding the position which a researcher brings to their study of Japan. There are two other sets of assumptions which are actually much more significant, but which are rarely, if ever, discussed explicitly, although they can be gleaned by an astute reader simply by looking at the bibliography and acknowledgments of any academic book on Japan. These two sets of assumptions 1. about the relationship between the person and society (see sections 3 and 4) and 2. about the distinction between Japanology and Japanese Studies (see section 5) overlap to a considerable degree. Moreover, they are essentially independent from any of the other variables that have been ex-

4 It was during their workshop that I realised for the first time that the way I was looking at the issue of returnee children (*kikoku shijo*) in Japan was so strongly driven by my interest in the class effects of education as a result of my own experience of the highly class-divided English education system.