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Special Section:
Gebrauchsanweisung Japan -
A Japan Manual



Prologue to the Special Section

“Gebrauchsanweisung Japan - A Japan Manual”

Christian W. Spang

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Editors' note: We are pleased to showcase the work of Dr. Christian W. Spang and eight of his students in this issue of the *OTB Forum*.

Many bright and promising ideas are lost because students have little chance to publish their views. This problem affects even those studying at Japan's elite universities. Therefore, I am very pleased that the editors of *OTB Forum* have accepted this special section and thus given another group of my (former) students a voice (see Spang, 2011).

The following eight texts are based on two advanced German courses taught during the 2011 academic year at Keiō University and the University of Tsukuba. Students at Keiō University's Law Department can choose an intensive German program, which means that they have three to four German classes per week. In last year's course, we read and discussed parts of an introduction to Japan by Andreas Neuenkirchen (2009), which is not so much a guide book in the traditional sense, but tries to explain Japanese customs, traditions and everyday life to a German audience. The title of his book is *Gebrauchsanweisung für Japan*, which can be translated as “A Japan Manual”. Neuenkirchen's book has been the inspiration for this special section. In the summer of 2011, my Keiō students had to prepare a term paper by choosing a topic and composing a short introduction for imaginary visiting students from Germany. Upon getting the corrected papers, they were consulted about publishing their texts, to which they consented.

Later, I asked my Tsukuba students to write similar texts. All three participants from Tsukuba have spent some time in Germany. One of them is a researcher at a non-

university affiliated institute; another one is a Chinese engineering student, who started to learn German in Japan. In last year's course, participants regularly prepared short writing assignments about anything they were interested in. These texts were distributed to all participants and discussed in class, as has been described in one of my earlier papers (Spang, 2006). The third term of the 2011 academic year was devoted to the creation and improvement of their texts about anime, washoku and the Japanese New Year.

After enquiring with the OTB editors if they saw potential for these texts to be published in this journal, my students translated their introductions into Japanese and added German-Japanese vocabulary lists, which will make the original German versions accessible to intermediate learners as well. Therefore, this special section on contemporary Japanese life and culture can be read just for pleasure, used for self-study, or utilized in intermediate or advanced German classes. The exception is Zhe Liu's introduction to Japanese food (*washoku*), because she translated the German text into her native Chinese, including a German-Chinese vocabulary list, thus making this project truly multi-lingual (English, German, Japanese and Chinese).

All contributions have been corrected, thoroughly revised, and enlarged by Christian W. Spang. This process, which included the editing and streamlining of the Japanese versions, took many months and involved considerable input by the author of this prologue. Despite the personal style of Mr. Kobayashi's work, a considerable part of it was written by the co-author. Taking all revisions and the edition effort into account, both authors contributed an equal share in this case.

Spang, C. W. (2012). Prologue to the Special Section “Gebrauchsanweisung Japan - A Japan Manual”. *OTB Forum*, 5(1), 19-20.

As has been stated above, the Japanese texts are translations from the original German, which means that some of them may not sound 100% natural but are similar to texts written by foreigners with advanced Japanese proficiency. It has to be mentioned here that Tamura Osamu thoroughly corrected the Japanese translations of the texts by Kobayashi and Spang, Satō Ryōsuke and Ōmori Atsukata, for which I want to express my deepest gratitude. To a lesser extent, Sasai Atsushi was also involved with proofreading some of his colleagues' Japanese texts.

Finally, I would like to introduce the topics of this special section. The texts can be separated into two groups. First, there are introductions to contemporary youth culture: Mangakissa, manga and anime as well as the Japanese cram school system called *juku*. The second section introduces various aspects of Japanese society. The first of these texts talks about baseball in Japan while the second one explains some features of Japanese food and drink (*washoku*), seen through the eyes of a Chinese visiting student. The final two chapters introduce some (more or less) traditional aspects of Japanese culture such as fireworks festivals and New Year's activities.

I am very pleased to present here a collection of short introductions about specific aspects of Japanese life and culture, written by six Japanese and one Chinese student along with one Japanese researcher. In detail, the special section includes the following chapters (please note that some of the titles are presented here in abridged form):

1. Gebrauchsanweisung "Mangakissa" by Atsutaka Omori (Keiō), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang;
2. Gebrauchsanweisung "Manga" by Ryosuke Satō (Keiō), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang;
3. Gebrauchsanweisung "Anime" by Takahisa Kobayashi (Tsukuba) and Christian W. Spang;

4. Gebrauchsanweisung "Juku" by Takeru Onizuka (Keiō), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang;
5. Gebrauchsanweisung "Baseball-Kultur" by Atsushi Sasai (Keiō), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang;
6. Gebrauchsanweisung "Japanisches Essen (*Washoku*)" by Zhe Liu (Tsukuba), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang;
7. Gebrauchsanweisung "Sumida Feuerwerk" by Mariko Hori (Keiō), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang; and
8. Gebrauchsanweisung "Das japanische Neujahr" by Osamu Tamura (Tsukuba), in cooperation with Christian W. Spang.

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About the author: Christian W. Spang was an associate professor at the University of Tsukuba 2009-2012 and taught at Keiō University as an adjunct professor during those years. In April of 2012 he moved to the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Daitō Bunka University, and he continues to teach at the Area Studies' Master's program in Tsukuba as an adjunct professor. His research interests include 20th century geopolitics and history, German-Japanese relations, as well as language teaching.