



# LUNCH SEMINAR

## on the Japanese Economy and Society

at the Maison franco-japonaise

### "Population Decline and Ageing in Japan: The Social Consequences"

**Florian COULMAS**

German Institute for Japan Studies (DIJ, Tokyo)

---

**Discussant**

**Marc HUMBERT**

The Research Institute at the French-Japanese House

**April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Friday), from 12:30 pm to 2 pm**  
**Maison franco japonaise, room 601 (6<sup>th</sup> floor)**

*With the generous support of the Economic Section of the French Embassy and the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan*

#### Summary

Japan's economic and social development since the end of the Pacific War is a story of growth and success. Life improved continuously for the vast majority of all Japanese. Yet, the level of life satisfaction in Japan is low by international comparison. The Japanese are rich, healthy and long-lived, but not as content as indicators of material wellbeing would predict. While their life-expectancy rose, their readiness to reproduce declined. Over the past half century Japan's total fertility rate (TFR) fell to less than one third of what it was in mid twentieth century. What does Japan's experience of demographic change teach us about the effects of birth-rate and family size on happiness? Can TFR be used for measuring the "livability of nations"? Conventional wisdom says that children are a source of happiness. Economic wisdom says that children are both a cost factor and a basis of social security. These interpretations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This paper pursues the question of how they can be combined to explain Japan's low fertility rate. It argues that the TFR decline is a response to an indication of a number of inconsistencies that the ageing society itself has produced.

#### Short Biography of Florian COULMAS



Florian Coulmas is Director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo. He holds the Chair of Japanese Studies at the Institute of East Asian Studies, University Duisburg-Essen. He has worked in various academic environments, including the University of Düsseldorf, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, The National Language Research Institute, Tokyo, and Chuo University, Tokyo. At the present time, he directs several joint research projects about the dynamics and consequences of social ageing in Japan.

His publications include 18 monographs, more than a dozen edited volumes and numerous articles in scholarly journals. His most recent book is *The Demographic Challenge*.

*A Handbook about Japan*, Leiden: Brill, 2008 (together with Harald Conrad, Annette Schad-Seifert and Gabriele Vogt).

#### Short Biography of Marc HUMBERT



Marc Humbert is Director of "bureau français de la Maison Franco Japonaise" and director of *The Research Institute at the French-Japanese House*. He is a Professor of Political Economy and the Chair of the Scientific Board of a think tank NGO (with consultative status to ECOSOC-UN) « Political and Ethical Knowledge in Economic Activities ». He has published intensively for years, last book in 2006 "Democracy endangered by Economy" *La démocratie au péril de l'économie*.

## What is the Lunch Seminar?

This typical event has been organized at the Maison-Franco Japonaise (Nichi-Futsu Kaikan) – Room 601 (6F) from 12.30 to 14.00, since 2004 with the generous support from the Economic Section of the French Embassy and the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan. For more information, please visit the website of the seminar : [http://www.mfj.gr.jp/lunch\\_seminar/lunch\\_seminar.html](http://www.mfj.gr.jp/lunch_seminar/lunch_seminar.html)

Please note that this is a "brown bag lunch seminar" (please bring your sandwiches or "bento").

## How to attend the Lunch Seminar ?

The participation to the Lunch Seminar is free but **registration is strictly required**. Please apply by e-mail to : [mikasa@mfj.gr.jp](mailto:mikasa@mfj.gr.jp) ; or by fax (03-5421-7652) specifying your :

- |                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| – name                   | – adress |
| – company or institution | – phone  |
| – position               | – e-mail |

**NB : The presentation will be followed by a discussion with the participants (in English, no translation).**

## How to get there ?



**Nichifutsu Kaikan (MFJ) : Shibuya-ku, Ebisu, 3-9-25**

▷ From the Ebisu JR station take the Skywalk Exit, turn left and walk 5 mn alongside Yebisu Garden Place.

