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Some Reflections on Comparative Sociology and Comparative Area Studies

1. Introduction: The Background of this Study

In 2002 I published a small book entitled *Changing Attitudes towards Gender Equality in Japan and Germany* (MÖHWALD 2002a) in which I tried to put the results of the German Institute for Japanese Studies' 1991 survey on the value consciousness of the Japanese into a comparative perspective by using additional quantitative data from other surveys that provided time series and a lot of qualitative material concerning gender relations and family life. The major question for me was how the changes in family life after World War II did affect gender roles and the idea of gender equality in the family in both countries, because in both allied directives made it clear that the guarantee of gender equality became a firm part of their new postwar constitutions.¹

Actually, my book emerged out of a series of lectures on the Japanese and German family and gender relations that I had given in the fields of comparative Japanese Studies, European Studies, and comparative sociology at Chubu University, Aichi Gakuin University, Nagoya City University, and Aichi Kyôiku University since 1994, and in which I especially used results of social history research on the Central European and the Japanese family to assess the significance of the evolvement of the modern family in both countries. During work on these lectures and my discussions with the members of the Japanese Society of Comparative Family History I noted that macro-level comparisons often lead to conclusions that contradict the realities of family life on the micro level.² The important point for me after reading Heidi ROSENBAUM's (1982) voluminous study on family forms in 19th Century Germany, Michael MITTERAUER and Reinhard SIEDER's studies on the social history of the Central European family (MITTERAUER and SIEDER 1977, 1982; SIEDER 1987), and ARUGA Kizaemon's voluminous study on the family system and the tenancy system in 1930s Japan (ARUGA (1966) is the fact that the rural family forms in early modern rural Central Europe and rural Japan in the early Shôwa period differ completely from the modern family concerning to who and for what reason is considered a member of the co-residential group and who is not, and that in most of the early modern family forms, kinship relations with the head of the house were not a necessary criterion to define membership in the *ganzes Haus* or *the ie* (家).

Ever since my study on the ARUGA Kizaemon's sociology of the Japanese rural family from the 1930s to the 1950s I had been baffled by the similarities between the results of his studies and those of the social history of the Central European rural family that were published in the late 1970s and the 1980s, and in my lectures, I tried to explore this fact more in detail, which also influenced my approach to the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data in my book from 2002.

I was not aware about the unusualness of my approach until I read Michael TERWEY's review of my book from the same year. TERWEY evaluated my book as a successful

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combination of comparative sociology and cultural studies.³ Because of the disparity of the data sets that were available for Japan and Germany, I could not use the customary approach to data comparison typical in comparative sociology, which consists of the direct macro-level comparison of two or more countries within the same data set, instead I opted for a separate analysis of the development in each of the two countries and a comparison of the results of these separate analyses. Due to this approach cultural differences between West Germany, East Germany, and Japan that had a strong impact on the results of the data analysis of the 1994 ISSP survey on family relations and women's roles became immediately obvious, and this point was further reinforced when I wrote a review on a book on secondary analysis using cross-cultural data in 2002.⁴

In my own approach to data analysis I was heavily influenced by ARUGA Kizaemon's dictum that the observation of similar facts in two different socio-cultural settings does not necessarily imply that these facts have the same meaning in each of the two cultures, and that we must be sure that both are really the same before we make far-reaching conclusions concerning the universality of our observations (we do not treat Japanese pears (*nashi*) and apples as the same fruit, because both grow on trees and look alike, even if we cut them in half, and also belong to the genus of *pyrus*; one bite in each of them makes clear that they are quite different).⁵ However, ARUGA Kizaemon was not a comparative sociologist, he rather was the antithesis of one. ARUGA did not study sociology as an undergraduate student. Due to his position as the household head of the main family of a vast and powerful family association (*dôzoku* 同族) in rural Nagano Prefecture since childhood, he was heavily involved with the economic, social, and cultural obligations of his family and as a high-school student⁶ he was involved with the regional education movement and the idealistic cultural movement around the journal *Shirakaba* (白樺), YANAGI Muneyoshi's folk-art movement, and SHIBUSAWA Keizô's activities in organizing a private museum of Japanese folklore. His family had expected him to study law at Kyôto University, but after two years of mainly attending lectures in economics and philosophy, he had enough and changed to Tokyo University to study art history and under YANAGI's influence he finished his studies with a thesis on Buddhist art in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. However around this time his group of friends became involved with YANAGITA Kunio and became active in the development of ethnology and folklore studies in Japan, and he became one of the founders of the academic journal *Minzokugaku Kenkyû* (民族学研究『Ethnos』). Until the mid-1930s his research on rural Japan essentially belonged to the realm of ethnology or folklore studies, turning more and more to community studies and rural sociology in the course of the decade. Due to his financial independence ARUGA was not working at any university and lived his life as a private scholar until after the postwar land reform deprived him from much of his financial independence.⁷ Due to his academic background ARUGA was mainly interested in finding the specifics of social relations and the family in Japan and he was quite critical of quantitative approaches to international comparison and the application of Western concepts to the Japanese family.⁸ However in the mid-1950s he headed a comparative research project on the family in East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan) and his experiences during this research project led to his insistence on the importance of understanding the peculiar cultural meaning of observed social phenomena in different cultures.⁹

My experiences while studying sociology, ethnology, Japanese studies, and Chinese studies convinced me that a comparative and contrastive approach is indispensable for understanding the peculiarities of different societies and cultures. And here lies the basic weakness of ARUGA's own research on rural Japan. Throughout his discussion of the family system in rural Japan

(ARUGA 1966) ARUGA insisted that he was especially interested to identify the special (national) character of social relations in Japan, and he located this special character in the principles that governed the composition of the rural family and its formation of associations with other family units (*ie* 家・*ierengô* 家連合). However, the problem is that methodologically it is only possible to ascertain a specific (national) character of social relations by comparison of these social relations with similar social relations in other countries (cultures), what ARUGA did not do in his research, at least not in an explicit and systematic way. I have to admit that ARUGA did implicitly contrast his observations of the rural family with TODA's definition of the family that was based on contemporary Western concepts of the universality of the Western European modern family,¹⁰ but this does not constitute comparison in the sense of ARUGA's later ideas concerning comparative research.

I was reminded of this point at the end of a symposium where I presented one of my early attempts of putting the results of the German Institute of Japanese Studies' 1991 survey on the value consciousness of the Japanese into a comparative perspective.¹¹ After the proceedings of the symposium were finished, Harumi BEFU introduced SUGIMOTO Yoshio and his new Australian company Trans-Pacific Press and wanted to discuss whether to publish the proceedings of the symposium with this company and which papers should be included in the publication, and he suggested to exclude my paper, because it was the only comparative analysis presented at the symposium.¹² This comment elicited vigorous critique by Tom GILL and SUGIMOTO Yoshio who had strongly approved of my discussion and its combination of cultural studies and comparative analysis. Both pointed out that comparison and contrastive analysis was deeply engrained in Western cultural anthropological research on Japan, but was always implicit and never explicit, taking the form of unconscious comparison with one's own culture bordering on ethnocentrism and a loss of value freedom and the solidification of national prejudices, while my approach showed possibilities to overcome this problem that plagued American area studies and Japanese Studies since the 1950s, including BEFU's own old research. For me this critique was an eye-opener. In social research comparison and contrastive analysis has to be explicit, critical, and reflective in order to lead to meaningful interpretation of the observed social and cultural facts, their commonalities, and their differences. And I subsequently tried to ascertain this approach in my book from 2002.

In the more than 50 years since I became a student at Marburg University in the autumn of 1970, I have worked in the fields of East-Asian studies (mainly Japan) and European studies (mainly Germany) with a disciplinary nexus of sociology, cultural anthropology, and cultural studies, and without neglecting to also look at other regions of the world. Africa, the Middle East and Latin America were first in my vision, followed by South-East Asia and North America; and more recently South Asia has become another focus of my interest. Throughout the years the topics of my studies and research have included the research areas of socioeconomic development and modernization, the history of the European encounter with East Asia and the history of European humanities, rural society, the family, sociology and history of science, images of one's own and other cultures, value change, gender, human migration, prejudice and discrimination, social stratification and inequality, religion, education, and youth subcultures. These are very vast areas of research interests, indeed, and I treated most of these research areas in a contrastive and comparative way, in which the interpretation of cultures and societies has been a key element of my work, and I also learned that social research has to be critical and reflexive in the sense that we have not only to critically reflect the results of prior research, the social and historical conditions of our research objects, our research methods, and the results of our research, but that we also must be critically reflexive about

our own attitudes towards our research objects and our results, as well as towards the social conditions in which we conduct our research.¹³

This article starts with a text about the significance of comparative social research that was originally written in Japanese in 2011-2012 as an introduction of my revised materials for my lecture on comparative sociology. However, since I was charged with different lectures in April 2012, the text never made it to the students. The next chapter on comparative area studies also evolved out of a Japanese text for a lecture, this time my part of an online omnibus lecture on comparative area studies with which I was charged in 2020. Both Japanese texts have been extensively rewritten and annotated while I translated them into English.

2. The Significance of Comparative Studies in Social Research

According to KAJITA Takamichi (1993) in the Japanese *New Encyclopedia of Sociology*,¹⁴ the term comparative sociology “indicates a method that takes up several temporally or spatially differing social groups or systems as objects of analysis and analyses for which reason their behavior and functions are identical or different.” Formulated in a more easily understandable way, KAJITA defines it as the goal of comparative sociology to understand why the people belonging to different cultures, either from different historical periods or from different countries (locations) behave in a similar, or in a completely different way. However, as with many other sociological terms, the question cannot be as easily answered as this encyclopedia of sociology suggests. Like in many other cases there are rather more difficult implications hidden behind this easy definition if we ask for the goal of comparative sociology. As Immanuel WALLERSTEIN (1993) has made clear, the demand for comparative research in sociology first of all emerged out of methodological problems concerning the results of empirical research. Rather than being interested in the problems of why human behavior differs in different cultures, or why it is the same, it has been the primary goal of comparative empirical research to confirm the universal validity of sociological findings. WALLERSTEIN reminds us of an important point: The significance of comparative research in sociology is closely related to what is generally perceived as the goal of sociological research. Let us examine WALLERSTEIN’s argument a bit more in detail. According to WALLERSTEIN the basic goal of empirical research in modern sociology was defined as to elucidate the universal principles of social life. In consequence it was generally believed that the causal relations between several variables that could be observed in the results of empirical research represented universal laws of social life. However, sociological empirical research has generally been only performed in one society, normally the home country of the researcher, thus from time-to-time doubts were raised whether the causal relations between the variables observed in this society were really a universal phenomenon, or whether they could be observed only in this society. In other words, it slowly became impossible to ignore the fact that there exist considerable differences between various societies, even if they are believed to belong to the same cultural sphere.¹⁵ At this point appeared the problem of how to interpret observed facts from only one society. Did the relations that could be observed among a set of variables really represent a universal relationship? Or did they only represent relationships that were limited to a certain space or a certain time, so-called local regularities, not universal laws? In order to solve this problem comparative social research was intended to prove whether a causal relationship that could be observed in one society between two variables (A) and (B) could also be observed in several other societies.¹⁶ If the same relationship can be observed, it is believed that the relationship can be treated as a universal regularity. However, in this case too several methodological problems still continue to

exist. For instance, if a relationship that was first observed in Germany and is then confirmed through comparative research to exist also in England and France and other Western European countries, this does not necessarily mean that the same relationship also exists in Eastern Europe or in non-European cultures.¹⁷

For instance, the French sociologist Pierre BOURDIEU indicated during the discussions after a lecture in former East Germany in 1989¹⁸ that the role which the capital possessed by the parents played in the education of their children was expressed differently in the socialist societies compared to capitalist ones. In the Western capitalist societies like France, America, Japan, and West Germany, the amounts of economic and cultural capital of the parents are closely related with their children's success in the education system.¹⁹ In the results of his observation of French and other capitalist societies he found a clear rule that the children of parents with a high amount of economic – and or cultural – capital had a much higher chance to proceed to the most prestigious universities (like the French *Grandes Écoles*, Harvard University, or Tōkyō University) than children of parents with a low amount of economic and cultural capital. In other words, he could observe a clear statistical relation between the two variables “amount of the parents’ economic and cultural capital” and “the children’s educational success”. However, the problem remained whether this relation constituted “universal law” or only a “local regularity”. Perhaps as a result of his discussion with the East German social scientists, BOURDIEU would have concluded that this observed rule did only constitute a “local regularity” (if he had been interested in this question). His East-German interlocutors had made it clear that many East Germans possessed considerable amounts of monetary savings, but that within the socialist system this monetary “wealth”²⁰ could not be transformed into private economic capital, and that therefore the same relation between “amount of the parents’ economic capital” and “the children’s educational success” as in the capitalist societies could not be observed, however, they were unsure about the impact of cultural capital, hence it did not constitute a “universal law” among contemporary industrial societies. Nevertheless, the discussion revealed another relationship: In East Germany the chances of children for success in the educational system were by no means equal, but the mechanism producing inequality was not bound to their parents’ possession of economic or cultural capital, instead it was bound to the social evaluation of the parents and their children to what degree they positively participated in the Communist Party and the organizations affiliated or in alliance with it, and thus constituted enthusiastic and firm supporters of socialism, which determined the chance of the children to proceed within the education system. BOURDIEU’s and others’ conclusion from this discussion was that this evaluation to be a “firm supporter of socialism” based on the persons’ degree of positive participation in socialist organizations constituted the image and social honor of the person as a “socialist hero”, in other words, it formed symbolic capital on which the person and his/her children could draw, and that the amount of symbolic capital should be included with the other three types of capital (economic, cultural, social) in its effect on children’s (educational) success.²¹

However, I rather want here to indicate the following two important points that are clear from WALLERSTEIN’s discussion. First, the goal of comparison is to confirm the universality of a certain social phenomenon, i.e., of a statistical relationship between several variables. In other words, it is the primary goal of quantitative comparative sociology to verify that a relation that could be observed in one society also exists in other societies. To put it bluntly, comparative sociology aims basically at detecting universal social laws. Only in the case that when this verification is not possible, because the relation between the variables differs and the thesis of universality is disapproved, the question of how this difference can be explained enters

into the focus of sociological comparative research. And then the search for cultural factors starts.²² Second, the research objects of comparative sociology are in general macro units, i.e., the societies of several countries as wholes, like French society, German society, Japanese society etc. in total. In this case internal differences within the same society are rather regarded as secondary phenomena and ignored as unimportant, and comparative research is only interested in the commonalities and differences between societies in their totality. However, in any social survey of one country the differences ('variance' in a statistical expression) that can be observed within the same society are striking, however these internal differences and variance disappear if we look at the macro level of this social collective in its totality and compare summary data from various societies. The problem here is that even when a relation between certain variables is similar on the level of summary data, there might be hidden considerable differences in the variance and its structure between the compared societies behind any commonality; and these differences only become evident if we first submit each of the societies selected for comparison to a more detailed analysis of the structure of the data. In my own comparative analysis of Germany and Japan I therefore opted first at a detailed analysis of each of the countries and then compared the results of these analyses rather than compare summary data.²³

In my opinion, the following examples illustrate this argument. The ISSP survey on women's roles and the family from 1994²⁴ included a question on the degree of agreement with the statement "A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and the family". When we compare the summary results for former West and East German women, we find a strikingly big difference between the women in both survey areas. In former West Germany 34% of the women agreed with this statement, while in former East Germany women's agreement amounted to only 11%, but a closer look at the data revealed that there also existed clear differences in the pattern of variance between the two research areas. In West Germany the degree of agreement with this statement is strongly related with the age of the women, while no such relation exists in East Germany. In West Germany the rate of agreement is especially high, exceeding sixty percent, among women who married during the 1950s and 1960s, while the agreement rate among the younger generations of women does not differ from that in East Germany. This points to differences in the life experiences of East and West German women during the 1950s and 1960s and makes the comparative analysis of these generational differences an important task.²⁵ On the other hand, closer examination of the results for West German and Japanese women show that in both countries a significantly higher rate of agreement can be observed among women from farm households, the majority of which was actually gainfully employed in the agricultural family business and had to deal with the multiple tasks of farming, household work, and child raising (in the former East Germany family farms had been abolished and replaced by collectivized agricultural cooperatives during the 1950s). An additional analysis of the results of qualitative research points to the degree to which women have been able to harmonize the three tasks of gainful work, household work, and child raising as an important factor for the differences between the survey areas and the social backgrounds of the women.

At this point I like to introduce the Japanese sociologist ARUGA Kizaemon's reflections about cross-cultural comparison. ARUGA tried cross-cultural comparison himself only once, but he discussed rather extensively why he did not engage in cross-cultural comparison after his first attempt at it.

ARUGA's point of departure is his concept of "social relations". In his case "social relations" are conceptualized as forms of human collective life which possess a relatively stable structure (or mode of life) like the Japanese house (*ie*, 家 i.e. *family*). According to ARUGA, this kind of

“social relations” are always placed within the context of a specific society and closely bound to the culture of this society and therefore “social relations” always receive a specific typical character based on the culture of the society in which they exist. In other words, they have a characteristic meaning within this culture.²⁶ As a result, if we look at two different societies, social phenomena that seem to be similar at first glance from the outside can have completely different cultural meanings within the social life of each of the two peoples. Based on this argument ARUGA demands to abandon the cross-cultural comparison of isolated social phenomena and proposes a two-stage approach to cross-cultural comparison. He demands that in the first stage we submit the social phenomena selected for comparison to a thorough analysis of their meaning within the social structure and its historical development within each of the societies we want to compare, and based on the results of this analysis assess in the second stage to what degree they may represent universal laws or local regularities. Of course, this kind of a two-stage approach to cross-cultural comparison implies a lot of work and the necessity of intimate knowledge of different cultures and their histories and languages, which is the reason for ARUGA's decision not to try further attempts at cross-cultural comparison.

One simple example helps to elucidate the impact of different cultural meanings: the problem of different family names of husband and wife as an indicator for the degree of gender equality in a society. Since the 1970s the Feminist Movement in Western Europe, North America, and Japan attacked the legal requirements of married couples to bear the same family name as an example of gender inequality and demanded that husband and wife will be allowed to continue to bear different family names after marriage, which led to a rather emotionally loaded battle in Germany and Japan that continued well into the 1990s.²⁷ The problem is the cultural meaning of why both spouses have to have the same or a different family name. In Europe and North America the common family name of a married couple is based on traditions of Christian ethics according to which the same family name of husband and wife symbolizes the unity and equality of the couple, and in Japan the Western idea of common family names was introduced with the general introduction of family names for all subjects during the Meiji Era.²⁸ Actually in China and Korea common family names of a married couple do not exist and husband and wife retain their original family names after marriage, but the reason for this practice stems from Confucian ethics of patrilineality in which wives are completely subordinated to their husband, but at the same time are regarded as strangers within their husband's family household that are subordinate to all of its members, separate family names of husband and wife therefore are a symbol of the gender inequality within the strictly patriarchal society. So, we not only have to consider the different meaning of social practices among different societies, but also the historical change of the meaning over time within the same culture.

An important problem with ARUGA's standpoint is the overbearing position of his concept of “ethnic character” (*minzokuteki seikaku* 民族の性格) of “social relations” in his sociological thought. In the formation of this concepts during the 1920s and 1930s ARUGA was heavily influenced by the linking of ethnicity (*Volk*, 民族) with culture and tradition in contemporary German philosophy, YANAGITA Kunio's conceptualization of the relation between culture and tradition, in which tradition evolves as additional layers around an invariable nucleus of culture (TSURUMI Kazuko 1975 uses the analogy of an onion to describe YANAGITA's concept), and the French sociology and ethnology of Émile DURKHEIM, Marcel MAUSS and the journal *L'Année sociologique* and its impetus on structure. ARUGA's concept of “ethnic character” is strongly linked to his understanding of culture as basically invariant and bound to ethnicity in which changing traditions only add new layers to the onion without changing

its character. Therefore, his concept is to a certain degree ahistorical and impervious to social change, and in my opinion, underestimates the degree to which tradition is a product of social change (see BESTOR 1990 for the concept of the production and reproduction of tradition as a result of social change). But the overbearing character of ARUGA's concept also has a detrimental influence on his two-stage approach to cross-cultural comparison, because it makes the understanding of the "ethnic character" of a society and its "social relations" within the context of their historical development a never-ending task for stage I without becoming able to ever proceed to stage II. And here we come to the problem of how we can decide that a social phenomenon has a specific character bound to a specific ethnicity and culture without cross-cultural comparison? Identity and specific character can only be established through distinction from the other, and only when we find that a certain "social relation" in one society and culture is distinct compared to similar "social relations" in all other societies and cultures can we establish that a certain "social relation" is imbued with a specific "ethnic character"; and this implies that it can only be ascertained through cross-cultural comparison.

ARUGA Kizaemon and his disciples have accumulated important results of research especially concerning the position and meaning of family forms within the structure of Japanese society and its historical development. But I doubt that they were able to ascertain the Japanese family's specific "ethnic character", because their research lacks the element of cross-cultural comparison. Actually, as I have noted above, the analysis of the function of the family within Japanese rural society from the Edo Period to the 1930s shows many similarities between the *ie* (家) and the Central European rural *Haus* from the 16th to the 19th Century. If we look at cross-cultural comparison, we must also be aware of the fact that social change proceeds in different societies producing non-simultaneities (*Ungleichzeitigkeiten*). A good example for this is the temporal differences in which the *modern Family* evolved in various European societies since the 16th Century and the length of time in which it was overlapped with the surviving older family forms and practices in various societies. Until the early 20th Century, we can find older family forms and practices co-existing with variants of the modern family, especially in rural areas of Central Europe. The contemporary form of the modern family became dominant first in the bourgeoisie since the late 18th Century, the new middle classes since the late 19th Century, and the labor class after the end of after World War I. It became the undisputed norm for all social strata only after World War II. In Japan the modernization of family forms began in the elites after the promulgation of family law in 1896, but the new law did not mean that prior family practices were immediately abandoned with its promulgation. In the 1930s it became prominent among the second and third sons of the upper middle classes who became the core of the new middle class of urban public and private employees. But only after the reforms of the family law in the late 1940s the *modern family* evolved into the standard of Japanese family life in tandem with the social change induced and propagated by high economic growth since 1955. The forms of the rural *ie* (家) described by ARUGA and other contemporary Japanese sociologists were already weakened in the late 1930s, and they received a decisive blow by the land reform of 1947-1949, but practices associated with the old *ie* (家) persisted in the more traditional affluent strata well until the end of the 1960s and beyond. However, I have to note that while we can see many, but non-simultaneous similarities in the development of family forms on the macro and meso levels of analysis, we can also observe considerable differences between the various societies of North America, Western and Central Europe, and Japan on the micro level of family practices.

At this point it is good to go back to KAJITA's definition of comparative sociology. Despite my critique of this definition, it contains an important truth concerning the task

of comparative sociology. When KAJITA stated that comparative sociology tries to find the reasons why social phenomena in different societies are identical or why they are different, he posed the question in a form that is not typical for quantitative empirical sociology. This is actually a question for the “why” or the understanding of the existence of our observed facts, and this kind of question for understanding the “why” is actually a type of questions that is alien to the problem consciousness of quantitative empirical research, and it rather belongs to the realm of in-depth qualitative empirical research. However, it is also essential for a deeper understanding of a society and its various social phenomena, which is a prerequisite to a fruitful adoption of ARUGA’s comments on cross-cultural comparison into comparative sociology. A comparative sociology that accepts this task has to abandon the approach of merely comparing summary data on the macro level of total societies. It has to adopt elements of cultural studies, it also has to combine spatial and historical comparison and to explore into the meso and micro levels of social practices and their historical development in each of the societies we want to compare,²⁹ and it has to be critical and reflective. Understanding the specific meaning of the social phenomena under scrutiny in each of the societies and cultures selected for comparison will also allow us to understand and explain the impact of culture beyond treating it merely as a black-box for ancillary explanations of “exceptions” to the rule. However, such an approach will be unable to avoid collision with the habitual paradigms of sociological quantitative empirical research, which will be staunchly defended because they propose a much easier way to produce reportable results.³⁰

3. What Are Comparative Area Studies?³¹

When I was asked to prepare a lecture for an omnibus-lecture on “Comparative Area Studies”, my first question was, what are comparative area studies, and what will I talk about? Inspecting the syllabus (which was not written by me) I found out that I should talk about Europe and that I should approach the problem of “comparative area studies” with examples from my own research. Not very helpful, because the concepts of “comparison” and “area studies” normally don’t mesh, but on the other hand I was involved in the 1990s with developing a new approach in German Japanese studies that some people started to call “comparative Japanese studies”, so I will approach the question posed in the title including a talk about my own research and its development.

My own academic training started in 1970 at Marburg University in former West Germany and unfolded in European (not only German) sociology, Japanology, Sinology, ethnology, mainly of African peoples, and German folklore studies that were in the process of transforming themselves into European ethnology. A closer look at my activities in sociology shows that among several areas of research I more or less concentrated on a critical approach to the history of sociology, which brought me into contact with French sociology,³² and on developmental sociology, which was mainly dealing with Latin American and African societies attempting a non-capitalist road to development. However, as I found out later, there were important points of contact between the two fields, because a discussion about the correct theory became one of the cornerstones in developmental sociology. In Japanology and Sinology I was mainly engaged with learning contemporary Japanese, classical and contemporary Chinese, and reading books about Japanese society and about the Chinese revolution. In ethnology I slowly concentrated on the development of African societies. But I read a lot, books about African history, Latin America, Vietnam, sociological theory, European, Chinese and Japanese history, 19th Century reforms in Egypt to induce economic development, and so on, and I started to

delve into the history of the development of East Asian Studies in Europe, and from there into the development of European humanities since the Enlightenment; one topic naturally led to the next. And despite my rather short comment what I learned in Japanology, Sinology, and Ethnology at another occasion, it turned out that in the course of my studies I was thoroughly trained in philology and the critical understanding of different cultures.

In the early 1970s sociological and economic research on developing societies and the theories on social and economic development were still basically divided into the orthodox Soviet Marxist approach of *Historical Materialism* and the American anti-Marxist *Modernization Theory*, but both were mainly political tools lacking in empirical evidence, and both were essentially evolutionist in nature, in the sense that both defined the evolvement of European capitalism and bourgeois society as the universal model for the development of modernity. So, it is no wonder that cracks started to appear in both camps among people who were dissatisfied with the continuing state of having no effective answer of how to induce development in 'underdeveloped' countries, and *dependency theory* started to blossom among liberal reformers and New-Left Marxists. On the Left, the battle occurred mainly among New-Left scholars, and the orthodox Marxists related with the Soviet Union, which answered with their theory of *non-capitalist development*.

It should be noted here that the early 1970s were a period that was still marked by the frontlines of the Cold War, but on the Left support for the Soviet Union was cracking with the surge of the New Left in the wake of the youth movements of the 1960s and the evolvement of Eurocommunism, especially in Italy, Spain, and France, and these cracks were also apparent in the Left-Wing theoretical discussions and attempts to relativize orthodox Historical Materialism already before the Prague Spring. In the mid-1960s, this discussion started with a reopening of the debate on the Asiatic Mode of Production in the most prestigious academic journal of the French Communist Party, *La Pensée*,³³ which was quickly countered by Eric HOBSEBORN's Introduction to the English translations of MARX's manuscript on *Forms that Precede Capitalist Production* in the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (*Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*) that reinforced the position of orthodox Historical Materialism (see HOBSEBORN 1964 and MARX 1964, 1970). The attack on the orthodox interpretation of MARX's views of history and socio-economic development was actually a start of a political critique of the policies of the Soviet Union in a rather obscure area of academic debate, but it had a considerable impact on the Left-Wing discussion on the development of the "underdeveloped" countries, because it introduced an element of variance into Historical Materialism's rigid schema of a sequence of economic formations or stages in the evolvement of capitalist society, which allowed to deviate from the prescribed road and proceed beyond the Cold-War ideological cleavage. The importance of these debates lies in the fact that the evolutionist paradigms of socio-economic development and modernization in universal stages of historical development blocked the search for the mechanisms, which fostered or which prevented economic and social development, and the critical re-evaluation of the paradigms opened a path to move beyond them.

I myself was mainly involved in the discussions in Marburg concerning MARX's *Forms that Precede Capitalist Production* and was regarded as a specialist for the French debate on Historical Materialism and the Asiatic Mode of Production, because I was able to translate the important texts from *La Pensée*, and also as a specialist for Japan, a country that was largely ignored in the European discussion on economic development, what was to a certain degree really funny, but which brought me to my first topic of doctoral research³⁴ and led to my deeper involvement with Japanese studies. The problem with developmental sociology and economics has been

that in their search for examples they almost never looked beyond the European cultural sphere (which included the former colonies in North America, Australia, and New Zealand). Studies like Maxime RODINSON's (1966, 1971) *Islam et capitalism* were rare and did not get much attention among scholars involved in developmental studies. And when they looked at countries like Japan, they were quickly done with the verdict, "they simply copied Europe". This despite the fact that Japan's economic development was without doubt successful.³⁵ However, about the time when I read RODINSON's book, I also stumbled over E. Herbert NORMAN's (1940) *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State*, and read it in tandem with RODINSON's book. It was an eye-opener, and I decided to make Japan's modernization during the Meiji Period the topic of my doctoral research, but I was too early and my own research was interrupted by the sudden and untimely death of both of my supervisors in sociology and Japanese studies in the mid-1970s.

For myself the importance of my research into the Japanese modernization during the Meiji Era was not limited to collecting and exploring data and material about Japanese society and its development, more important was that I recognized the importance of cross-cultural comparison and the real understanding of cultural factors for achieving a valid explanation of why Japan was the only non-European culture that had experienced a successful social modernization and economic development, and why other attempts, for instance in Egypt, had failed. And this became the start of my way into a double-tracked approach to Japanese Studies combining Area Studies, which demanded a deep understanding of language and culture, with comparative sociology, which allows to put observed facts into a broader perspective and to judge in which phenomena cultural factors are involved, and in which phenomena they are not important. This approach was further reinforced when I was given research on the Japanese rural family as the topic for my master thesis. However, this approach requires a lot of work, because one has to keep oneself up-to-date on the theoretical and methodological developments, research trends, and empirical research results in both fields.

What became quickly clear to me in the course of my studies was that comparative sociology and area studies have a very different problem consciousness, so in order to come to an understanding of what "comparison" could mean in the case of area studies let me first discuss what area studies are meant to be and how they came into existence, before continuing to talk about my own research.

The origins of area studies date back to the second half of the 17th Century, so their evolvment actually predated that of other humanities and social sciences. They started with the systematic observation of non-European people, their natural environment, and their life by travelers like Englebert KAEMPFER,³⁶ and their systematic collection by highly educated collectors of curiosities like Sir Hans SLOANE, and since the mid-18th Century also by institutions like the British Museum,³⁷ followed since the late 18th century by metropolitan learned societies like the French *Société des Observateurs de l'homme* that became crucial for the development of anthropology, ethnology, and oriental studies (see Moravia 1970, 1973 and also GUSDORF 1966-1982). From the work of MORAVIA and GUSDORF it is clear that the core of what we nowadays regard as area studies emerged out of the systematic observations of and reports from adventurous travelers who were themselves polymath scholars, mostly trained in philosophy, natural sciences, and medicine, like KAEMPFER, and more than a century later SIEBOLD.³⁸

The new direction of colonial expansion since the second half of the 18th Century brought a new stimulus to the systematic observation of non-European peoples, but at the same time led to a division of labor between those who observed cultures that did not possess writing

and those who observed cultures that did possess writing. The former evolved into ethnology and cultural anthropology, and the latter into new disciplines of oriental studies. At this point we must not forget another tradition of inquiry, the study of oriental languages, literature, and history that evolved out of theology and the history of (Abrahamic) religions, namely Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and developed a keen interest in the old oriental cultures that were reported in the Holy Scriptures, the *Talmud*, the *Bible*, and the *Quran*. These studies of ancient languages and cultures provided the methodology and tools of philology that became important for the development of South Asian, South-East Asian, and East Asian studies in the 19th Century.

However, I have to address an important fact at this point of my discussion: Ethnology and cultural anthropology are not identical with area studies, although they are often working in the framework of one or another area study. Both are academic disciplines with a distinct object of research and distinct methodologies, theories, and goals that are not limited to a specific geographical area or culture. In this sense they differ from the various oriental studies, which emerged since the 18th Century and were by definition tied to a specific geographical area and culture combining philology with history, geography, nature study, and the study of the people, their customs, society, economy, religion, literature, and all other relevant topics. The common denominator of both is the fact that both were conceived to study the people and cultures that did not belong to the Western and Central European cultural sphere in a broad sense that includes its offspring around the world.

At this point it becomes necessary to look at another element, namely the relations of the emergence of cultural anthropology, ethnology, and the philology of non-European cultures during the 19th Century with the parallel expansion of European colonialism.³⁹ This does not mean that the scholars engaged in these disciplines worked as proactive agents for colonial expansion,⁴⁰ however, they were socialized into the elites of their times, which included harboring a mental disposition for racism and the apology of colonialism, and they were at least silent collaborators and beneficiaries of colonial expansion that provided them with fields for research. However, as a scholar of the sociology of science I must insist on the truth that the emergence of new sciences and fields of research is always closely connected with the development of their social, economic, and political environment, and this is especially true, if we take into account the change of the academic environment with the restructuring of the institutions of higher education and learning since the early 1800s. With the increasing institutionalization and professionalization of science and scholarship after 1850 scholars and their disciplines became increasingly dependent upon the social structure and mental conditions not only in the academic community and the regulations and allotment of funds in their own academic institution, but also upon the perceptions of the political authorities and bureaucracies as well as public opinions in their country concerning the funding, tasks, and topics of research.

Perhaps the most important contribution of anthropology, ethnology, and sociology to Western social thought during the second half of the 19th Century was *Evolutionism* and *Spencerism*, the origins of which actually predate the publication of DARWIN's *The Origin of Species* in 1859, and they are rooted in teleological secular ideas about a manifest destiny of humanity and its history in 18th Century German philosophy. However, I am concerned here less with the doctrinal development of anthropological theory, but with their public impact in Western industrial societies.⁴¹ The ideas of Herbert SPENCER, Henry SUMNER MAINE, Johann Jakob BACHOFEN, Edward B. TYLOR, and Lewis H. MORGAN about a unilineal evolvement of human cultures with Western industrial, technological, and scientific civilization

as its apex – and especially in SPENCER's case, based on a progress caused by *the survival of the fittest* – meshed well with the mood and social mentality of the elites and the public in the increasingly nationalistic and imperialistic societies of Europe and North America of the second half of the 19th Century.

Evolutionism and *Spencerism* provided a template to assert one's own position in the world and in human history imbued with a duality of a sense of own superiority and a regret for the peoples of those cultures, which had not yet reached this apex of the evolution of human culture, which also provided an easy apology for colonialism, imperialism, and nationalistic aggression as a means to lift up these people from their perceived developmental state as children. This dualism is clearly expressed in the content of the World Expositions of the second half of the 19th Century, and especially evident in the spatial organization of the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris with its juxtaposition of the exhibition space of the advanced countries displaying the apex of the industrial, technological, and scientific civilization on the left side of the Seine, the museum of anthropology in the Palais du Trocadéro displaying the cultural evolution of mankind on the right side of the Seine, and the pride of French engineering, the Eiffel Tower in the middle.

At the end of the 19th Century the research of European ethnology, cultural anthropology, and various oriental studies covered Africa, the Middle-East, South Asia, South-East Asia, East Asia, Australia, and Oceania, and it covered cultures with and without writing. American academic interests differed considerably from the situation in Europe. Since the 1880s the development of higher education in the United States had progressed enormously, and sociology and cultural anthropology also showed a vigorous development since 1900, but American cultural anthropology was almost exclusively focused on the Americas, and American humanities in general had no interest in foreign countries except Western and Central Europe. With very few individual exceptions, there was no interest in the study of Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, despite the facts that the American merchant marine was strongly involved in East-Asian and South-East-Asian trade since the start of the 19th Century, the acquisition of the Philippines after the Spanish-American War of 1898, and the establishment of the Harvard Yenching Institute at Yenching University in Beijing in 1928.⁴² This situation became untenable with the rapid intensifying of the Cold War and the involvement of the United States into a Superpower in worldwide competition with the Communist Bloc after World War II.

However, fueled by the world-wide competition with the Soviet Union after World War II a rapid development of a new approach of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary area studies occurred in the United States and Western Europe. It started with a recognition of the poor development of the scientific knowledge of and research on foreign cultures and societies in the United States except concerning those in Western Europe and the Americas, and of the consequent lack of reliable information for policy making and strategizing foreign policy. Based on this recognition the three great foundations for the advancement of science in the United States, the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Carnegie Corporation, held a series of joint conferences to explore how international studies in the United States could be developed to a satisfying degree, and the results of these conferences gave birth to the rapid development of interdisciplinary area studies of specific regions that comprised the whole range of humanities and social sciences, first in the United States, and later in Western Europe and Japan. However, while comparative literature, linguistics, history, and cultural and social anthropology have become an integral part of area studies, other social sciences have not, and their contribution is often limited to quantitative macro-level comparative research while ignoring the influence of

culture on the pre-conditions and results of their research.

And here we come to the central problem of defining “comparative” area studies. Since the start of a tradition of area studies in the philology of oriental cultures in the 19th Century these studies understood themselves as mono-cultural, i.e. they limited their study to the culture of only one country, sometimes including a limited study of neighboring cultures to serve specific purposes.⁴³ Despite using an interdisciplinary approach, area studies have always focused on the deep understanding of the culture of one specific region and rather denied the possibility of general comparison between multiple cultures. Comparisons between two and more cultures have been extremely rare and in principle limited to phenomena for which a prior connection between these cultures could be established. And it should be noted that post-World-War-II American and British cultural and social anthropology has shied away from systematic cross-cultural comparison,⁴⁴ and this attitude has only been reinforced by the insistence on the understanding of the emic standpoint in cultural-anthropological fieldwork. In area studies it has always been a premise that the culture of the region, which becomes the research object, is different from one’s own culture, and it has been area studies’ major goal to foster the understanding of the politics, economics, and society of the country that becomes the object of research through understanding its culture. This can be clearly seen in examples of early American Japanese studies from the 1940s like E. Herbert NORMAN’s *Japan’s Emergence as a Modern State* from 1940 and *Soldier and Peasant in Japan* from 1943, and Ruth BENEDICT’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* from 1946.

To put it bluntly, area studies have first of all been conceptualized as cultural studies concerned with a specific geographical region, and cross-cultural comparison of this specific region with other specific regions of the world has not been perceived as a task of area studies. However, comparative research was also more or less ignored in the so-called systematic social sciences (economics, political science, sociology etc.) until the mid-20th Century when quantitative empirical research established itself as the dominant new paradigm in social research. And even then, it was generally believed that the discoveries of American and European social research represented universal laws of human society. The demand for comparative research increased when more and more examples appeared, which deviated from these laws, within the Western cultural sphere as well as especially in research of non-European societies. This kind of comparative research has largely proceeded in the form of the comparison of macro-level data for whole countries, which poses its own problems, because of the disappearance of the internal variance within a country on this level. In my opinion the divide between macro-level and micro-level research, and between quantitative and qualitative research is one of the weak points of comparative sociology that hampers to correctly understand the influence of culture, and reduces “culture” to a black box for ancillary explanations. Increasing doubts and dissatisfaction with this approach to “culture” in the systematic social sciences have resulted in an increasing demand for comparative cultural studies, and for comparison in area studies. But this demand faces its own problems, namely the limits to which a researcher can obtain a knowledge of the languages and deep understanding of a multitude of different cultures, albeit it is clear that cultural anthropologists like Clifford GEERTZ profited a lot from acquiring intimate knowledge and understanding of two different cultures (see GEERTZ 1995).

Now let me go back to my own research and see how I myself handled the question of a contrastive and comparative approach to area studies – and here I have first to state that GEERTZ’s understanding of culture was not limited to Indonesia and Morocco, the two countries in which conducted fieldwork, but it also included his own native culture. Cultural

anthropologist and comparative sociologists often forget their grounding in their own culture and its influence on their interpretations when they talk about comparison. However, this fact is very important for a reflexive understanding of one's own research. When my two advisors in sociology and Japanology suddenly died, I could not continue my prior research project and was confronted with the need to find new advisors and eventually a new topic for my thesis. I found them at the end of the 1970s and my new advisor in Japanology tasked me to inquire the concept of the family in Japanese rural sociology of the 1930s and 1940s. I had a good grounding concerning knowledge about pre-war Japanese society and some knowledge concerning family sociology, but I completely lacked knowledge of rural sociology. Therefore, I first set out to increase my knowledge about German research on the family and rural society (this is an approach I also adopted later when I moved into other topics of research, especially the sociology of science and the sociology of value change). This approach led automatically into a contrastive and comparative understanding of the development of rural family forms in Central Europe and Japan. Timing is always an interesting factor. European and West German family research in the late 1970s and early 1980s was strongly influenced by the new paradigm of historical family research in social history, which provided me with a new understanding of the development of the Central European family that allowed a conscious contrastive understanding of the research of the Japanese sociologists. And here I stumbled about an interesting fact. When ARUGA Kizaemon and the other Japanese rural sociologists of the 1930s contrasted their findings with the results of Western family sociology, they only had the family models of contemporary Western family sociology based on the bourgeois modern family and contemporary Western family sociology's misunderstandings concerning the historical development of Western family forms as their frame of reference, and they always found big differences between Japan and the West. However, looking at the results of historic family research on Central Europe of the late 1970s and early 1980s not only the errors in family sociology's understanding of the historical development of European family forms, but also the similarities between the Central European rural family of the 18th and 19th Century and the Japanese rural family of the 1930s became obvious, and led me to a better understanding of the *Ungleichzeitigkeiten* (non-simultaneities) in social change and their close connection to peculiar social, economic, political, and cultural factors in different societies.⁴⁵ I concluded that the point of reference for a contrastive analysis of the Japanese rural family of the 1930s should not be the early 20th Century Western bourgeois family but European rural family forms of the 18th and 19th Century and that the comparison of the social and cultural factors responsible for their similarities and differences would be fruitful for the understanding of rural family forms in general.

During my research on the rural family in Japan I also touched ARUGA Kizaemon's only attempt of comparative research from the 1950s on the Japanese, Korean, and Chinese family, and his insistence on the necessity of understanding the meaning of social phenomena within the culture of each society that enters into the comparison, because behind outward similarities might be hidden deep cultural differences that are not apparent on first glance. I agree with ARUGA to a certain point, but not with all of his conclusions, especially not with his refusal of further cross-cultural comparison. What became important to me is the thorough understanding of the historical and cultural factors that condition social phenomena in different societies as an indispensable part of comparative research. Just about the time of ARUGA's attempt at cross-cultural comparison that was based on the qualitative monographic method of case studies prevalent in contemporary Japanese rural sociology, the new paradigm of quantitative empirical research entered Japanese sociology with the study of social stratification

and social mobility. However, as I noted above, in the problem consciousness of quantitative cross-cultural research cultural factors only become important in hindsight when unexpected differences occur.

And here I come to the end of this chapter with formulating four demands concerning comparative area studies: First, the comparison of more than two different cultures is only possible through team-work. Second, the advanced understanding of the languages and the basic elements of the different cultures must be present in the research team; this does not mean that everybody has to understand everything, which is impossible in the normal time-frame of research projects, but that the research team must include specialists for each of the cultures, and specific additional knowledge can easily be obtained. Third, a careful selection of the topics for comparison is necessary to avoid overburdening of the researchers, and the comparative research should be composed of macro-level and micro-level quantitative and qualitative approaches. Fourth, a research approach of critical reflexivity has to be adopted by the research team.

4. A Final Comment

To a certain degree, it had been the primary goal for writing this text to show the limits of purely quantitative comparative analysis and to advocate its amendment with qualitative micro- and meso-level research and with comparative cultural studies. I believe that a comparative analysis based on indices derived from global macro-level data is more or less misleading, if we want to understand the commonalities and the differences between societies and cultures. What is perceived out of the results of data analysis as universal rules, in fact are mostly artefacts that gloss over important differences between societies and cultures. This does not mean that I am against quantitative analysis. Done correctly, always critically reflecting the limits of quantitative analysis and the impact of culture on the responses, it can be a powerful tool. I also want to point to ADORNO's caveat while discussing types constructed out of the analysis of quantitative data in the *Authoritarian Personality*: the analysis of quantitative data from questionnaire surveys with directed interviews can only scratch the surface of social mentality (ADORNO et al. 1950: 107).

The limits imposed on directed interviews and the size of questionnaires also always limits the range and scope of possible questions, I was strongly reminded of that fact when I was working on the construction of a questionnaire targeting prejudice and discrimination in the mid-1990s with a research group that included several members that were not specialists for quantitative research and were experiencing their first adventure constructing a questionnaire. They proposed and proposed tons of questions for revealing additional details to a degree that we ended up with almost 150 pages of possible questions. Scaling them down to an appropriate number was quite a fight. In her introduction to the methods of opinion poll research, NOELLE-NEUMANN, who had been working in this kind of research in Germany since the 1940s, pointed out that survey research target differences between collectives, not between individuals, and that its results become ever less valid and lose their predictive power, the closer we approach the micro-level (see NOELLE-NEUMANN and PETERSEN 1996). The strategy that the authors of the *Authoritarian Personality* adopted, namely constructing mentality types to find candidates for additional in-depth interviews has merit in this respect. However, ADORNO and his collaborators were not primarily interested in the particularities of the emergence of a specific element of social mentality, but in its general structure.

Micro-level qualitative research tells us a lot about people's daily life, their routines and

practices, and their common sense, and human practice on this level produces and reproduces social structure and its subcultural understanding (see BÖNISCH 1999: 11-35). Therefore, it is an indispensable addition to quantitative research for understanding the workings of culture. Because any society includes a multitude of subcultures defined by social classes, gender, ethnic minorities, and other conditions of life, culture itself is constructed, reconstructed, and changed on the meso and micro levels. Scholars in quantitative research are not always aware of this fact, because they live apart from the people who become their objects of research, and they seldom understand all the nuances of their own culture. Therefore, they have to adopt a detached stance toward their object of research and critically reflect their own predispositions, prejudices, and limitations when they approach “normal people” in their research. Quantitative survey research and its analysis allows a distance from the object of research, and that is often comforting.

Quantitative survey research not only allows a distance from the object of research, it also allows to shut one's eyes to social problems that one can only poorly detect with them (unless one does explicitly draw sufficiently big samples for small collectives that represent only a small minority in the total population, or survey areas where the poor concentrate, what the ancestors of Japanese empirical social research of the Society for Social Policy (the *German Gesellschaft für Sozialpolitik* and the Japanese 「社会政策学会」) did in the 1890s in Germany and in Meiji-Period Japan). We should not forget HABERMAS' statement in the introduction to his *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (1981) that sociology is a science of crisis, born out of the social crises and social problems of the late 19th and early 20th Century.

Another problem that is seldom discussed in quantitative comparative social research is the fact that we can observe clearly different patterns in theoretical and methodological reasoning and the use of empirical research among the national academic communities in Western societies, a fact that becomes quickly obvious to anybody who regularly uses texts from German, French, British, American, and Japanese social and cultural research in their original language.⁴⁶ KÖNIG's (1999) historical research on mechanical engineering in Germany, Britain, the United States and France revealed clearly different cultural patterns in which science and technology is approached in these countries, and BEFU and KREINER 1992 trace the differences in the national approaches to Japan in Japanese Studies. What does this mean for the results of research? This question has only been marginally explored, even in the history and philosophy of science. As far as I can see, even if the impact of cultural differences on the objects of research are perceived as a problem, this question concerning the impact of cultural differences in research itself has never been inquired in social research and its reasoning.

However, my own approach in the research for my book of 2002, i.e. not directly comparing the summary data, but comparing the results of research on the development of attitudes concerning gender equality in each of the research areas might give an example of how to proceed to comparative area studies. This approach starts with selecting a topic for comparative analysis that is narrow enough to also allow the inquiry of the cultural factors involved in each research area in their historical and genetic context. This approach means, that we have to make use of great variety of prior research and of a lot of disparate data from the areas selected for comparison, which itself limits the use of a direct comparison of summary data and indices.

This kind of reasoning cannot rely solely on the interpretation of statistical probabilities. In establishing the existence of common trends and different paths in the social development of different cultures out of the analysis of diverse and disparate material, data and research results, our reasoning has to be essentially qualitative in nature, because the constant question of why

certain phenomena are similar, or why they are different, is an integral part of this kind of reasoning. In other words, the medal of comparative sociology has to be complemented by its reverse side, comparative area studies or comparative cultural studies.

However, most scholars of academic social sciences and area studies have other priorities and agenda, first of all they have to survive and prosper within their academic communities, and there are easy ways to do it, and difficult ones. The comparative study and interpretation of societies and cultures is a difficult one. And this leads me back to the question of comparative area studies that combine social and cultural research, and that is definitely a difficult field, especially if one works alone.

Notes

1. Article 14 of the Japanese constitution of 1946 forbids any kind of political, economic or social discrimination according to race, beliefs, gender or social status, and article 24 especially deals with gender equality in the family. In Germany, article 3, clause 2 of the new West German federal constitution of 1949, the Basic Law, states: "men and women have equal rights," but the guaranty of gender equality was also incorporated in the constitutions of the new West German federal states, e.g., in article 1 of the Hessian constitution of 1946. Much in the same way like in West Germany, article 7, clause 1 of the new East German constitution of 1949 declares that men and women have equal rights and article 7, clause 2 declares any law which conflicts with the equal rights of women as void (Shiono et al. 1993: 26; Hessischer Minister für Kultus und Unterricht 1949: 7, 39; Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: 6). However, the constitutional guaranty of equal rights of men and women was not something new in Germany, it was already included in article 109 of the Weimar Constitution of August 1919 (Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches 1919). Actually, there exist important differences to what degree gender equality in family life is enforced in the Japanese constitution of 1946 and the West German *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law) of 1949, which gave the postwar conservative governments in both countries very different chances to obstruct its legal implementation. Especially important is Article 24 of the Constitution of Japan, in which Beate SIROTA succeeded to render the provisions of family law that institutionalized gender inequality in part IV of the Meiji Civil Law (*Kyūminpō* 旧民法) and the Family Register Act (*Kosekihō* 戸籍法) invalid with the promulgation of the new constitution on May 3, 1947.
2. I'm thinking especially of MURDOCK's (1949) infamous thesis of the universality of the nuclear family. In her discussion of her studies on the family in the case of the Hare Indians of the Northwest Territories of Canada HARA Hiroko pointed to the fact that they do not form co-residential groups based on family relations and that the mother, the father, and the children each belong to different camps (see HARA 1989); I myself had great doubts concerning MURDOCK's thesis based on my knowledge of family practices in polygamous societies and African and South-East Asian matrilineal co-residential groups. MURDOCK's results simply are an artifact based on his way of classification of the categories for data analysis. The same is true to a certain degree for historical demographic research like Peter LASLETT and the Cambridge Group's (Laslett and Wall 1972) quantitative approach to family history, which simply excluded all non-kin household members from the category "family" in their reconstitution of families from household registers and other sources, despite the fact that at least in the popular classes the kin-groups did not necessarily form a distinct unit within the early modern households and the duties of control and support of the *pater familias* extended to all co-resident household members including non-kin, see for this also chapter one of LASLETT 1965. This caveat is even more important, when we look at the family in early modern Central Europe and in Edo-Period Japan.
3. Cultural studies evolved in the United Kingdom during the 1970s and 1980s as a critical new approach to the ethnology or social and cultural anthropology of Europe that hitherto had been thought to be the field of folklore studies. British cultural studies of the time were heavily influenced by New-Left Marxist theory and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, especially ADORNO's approach to culture. Its most influential proponent was the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham

University with its research on youth subcultures in Britain.

4. Möhwald 2002b. One of the articles in this book tried an analysis of the peculiarities of Japanese gender relations based on the 1994 ISSP survey in the customary way. The author submitted the complete data set of more than 30,000 respondents worldwide to a factor analysis in which the peculiarities that are obvious in a separate factor analysis of the Japanese dataset disappeared. At this point it became clear to me that in this kind of macro-sociological approach the variance between the countries tends to disappear, not at least due to the overwhelming number of respondents from Anglo-Saxon countries in the complete data set.
5. In other words, we have to understand the cultural differences and commonalities in the meaning of social phenomena. And although in the methodological introduction to his monumental study on the rural Japanese family system from 1943 (ARUGA 1966) ARUGA explicitly distances himself from Max WEBER's concept of understanding sociology, this dictum comes very close to WEBER's conception of *verstehen* (to understand), see also ANDRESKI 1984: 26-34.
6. Japanese high schools in the prewar education system functioned as preparatory schools for university for students of age 18-20.
7. He became a chair-holding professor of sociology at Tōkyō Kyōiku University in 1949 and after his retirement from this university in 1957 he became a professor at Keiō Gijuku University, and in 1965 he became president of Japan Women's University. A discussion of ARUGA's background and academic development can be found in MÖHWALD 1983 and 1990.
8. This point is especially evident in ARUGA's recurrent critique of TODA Teizō's (TODA 1926, 1937) definition of the family and its application to the rural family in Japan by TODA's disciples.
9. Reports on the results of this project are given in ARUGA 1956 and 1957, how ARUGA reflected his experiences is discussed in ARUGA 1980 and MORIOKA 1988. On some of the methodological problems inherent in the superficial comparative interpretation of data also see ANDRESKI 1972.
10. The term "modern Family" here refers to the family form of the affluent middle classes that emerged in Western Europe since the second half of the 17th Century and was characterized by the limitation of its membership to consanguineous relatives, especially parents and children, privacy (towards the outside of the household as well as towards non-kin household members), a severe gender-role division, and the idealization of a mutual bond of love between its members.
11. Between 1994 and 2000 I presented my ideas concerning a comparative approach to value change in Japan at several international symposia which were later published as Möhwald 1996a, 1996b, and 2000. The symposium discussed here was organized by Harumi BEFU and Tom GILL as "Recent Social and Cultural Change in Japan" at the Institute of Cultural and Human Research, Kyōto Bunkyo University on 14-15 March 1998.
12. Since all the other papers presented came from cultural anthropologists, I suspect that Harumi was even more miffed by my quantitative sociological approach, but did not want to bring this up, because SUGIMOTO Yoshio was another sociologist attending the symposium.
13. See Horkheimer 1937, Vogelmann 2021:114-118 and 123-125, and also Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994 and 1996.
14. From the point of view of the history of science, scientific encyclopedias of a discipline are an important source, because their articles reflect a minimal disciplinary consensus concerning topics of and approaches to research, theories, and methods that are deemed as valid and appropriate within the scientific community at a certain time and space.
15. A good example is DURKHEIM's conclusion in his comparative empirical research on suicide published in 1897 that the stronger social control and higher integration among Catholics results in markedly lower suicide rates among Catholics than among Protestants (see Durkheim 1967a). This thesis was thwarted in the 20th Century by the fact that for a long time the highest suicide rates among European countries were recorded in Austria and Hungary, two overwhelmingly Catholic societies. See also Durkheim 1967b.
16. It should be noted that in this logical reasoning a major methodological problem is hidden. Statistical relationships are not causal relationships, they do not establish that a factor (f) causes a relation (A) → (B), they only allow a statement like: when the expression (x) of variable (A) is given, it has a probability of (y) percent that an expression (x') of the variable (B) can be observed, and the distinction between

- independent and dependent variables is more or less only a voluntary convenience. If 70% of the men and 30% of the women choose a certain answer, this only means that men have a higher probability to choose this answer than women, but not that the answer was chosen because the respondent was a man or a woman. This problem is often forgotten in the interpretation of statistical relationships.
17. Here we have another problem of comparative social research: Ethnocentricity that is in part a result of the predominance of certain countries of Europe and North America in social research, but also a result of lingering remnants of evolutionism that define Western modernity as the apex of human social development and bourgeois social relations as the universal rule. Ethnocentrism has been perceived as a problem and critically reflected in European and American cultural anthropology, and in area studies of non-European cultures since the late 1960s. GEERTZ's (1973, 1983) new approach to the interpretation of cultures especially shocked Anglophone cultural anthropology, LECLERC's (1972) analysis of the role of colonialism in the formation of ethnology and the rediscovery of SURET-CANALE's (1958, 1961) critical analysis of African history in the late 1960s and early 1970s strongly influenced the discussion of ethnocentrism in French and Central European ethnology, and SAID's (1979) critical analysis of Orientalism had an impact worldwide on Asian and oriental area studies. However, the discussions in cultural anthropology and area studies about the distortion of the interpretation of other cultures by open or hidden ethnocentric attitudes of the researcher had little impact on sociologists who predominantly dealt only with their own culture. It should be noted that the impact of ethnocentrism in the interpretation of other cultures is also evident among Marxist social scientists, see SOFRI 1969, 1972.
 18. This lecture at East Berlin's Humboldt University happened after the fall of the Wall and was BOURDIEU's first time to be invited for a workshop by a research institution in one of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, see BOURDIEU 2002, on BOURDIEU's understanding and conception of the various forms of "capital" see BOURDIEU 1979 and 1994.
 19. Besides economic capital, especially in the white-collar new middle classes, the cultural capital possessed by the parents had a major impact on the educational success of their children in most Western industrial societies, and social capital sometimes also had a certain influence.
 20. I put "wealth" into parenthesis because after German reunification it became clear that the high amount of monetary savings in East Germany was largely due to the limited usefulness of money in a society with a planned scarcity of consumer goods and severe price control. Acquiring scarce goods could not be attained by offering more money, but only by offering other scarce goods or services in informal exchange.
 21. It should be noted, however, that the question is not so easily resolved. The evaluation of a person as being a "firm supporter of socialism" was not really a 'social' evaluation by the peers, but one decided by the bureaucracy of the Communist Party, especially the *Staatssicherheitsdienst* (secret police), which controlled the allocation of students to higher education, hence this evaluation was fluid and often arbitrary, and could easily become invalid.
 22. At this point I want to stress the fact that in much of macro-level comparative social research 'culture' merely functions as a black box that allows ancillary explanations for observed differences as exceptions to the rule in defense of the stated, but actually disapproved, universality of a relation. As KUHN (1962) has convincingly shown, theoretical paradigms are seldom easily abandoned when they are confronted with differing empirical evidence, also see TOULMIN 1977.
 23. Another problem that becomes important if we submit data sets of combined samples to factor analyses and several other types of multivariate analysis are numerical differences between the original sample sizes that give much higher weight to the bigger samples in the results for the composite sample and lead to the disappearance of considerable differences between separate national results.
 24. During the 1990s and the 2000s the German ISSP surveys drew separate samples for former East and West Germany which allow a much more detailed analysis for each area.
 25. Part I of SCHISLER 2001a deals with the construction of West German national identity during the 1950s, and especially the articles of HEINEMAN, SCHISLER and BIESS deal with the changing position of men and women during 1940s and 1950s. While women's position in society was highly independent and economically important during the second half of the 1940s, because of the absence of men immediately after the war and the collapse of masculine authority due to losing the war, the

revelation of German war crimes, and of a gender order that was affiliated with Nazism, during the 1950s the conservative leadership in politics, education, and media strongly engaged in reestablishing the traditional gender order and male authority and male-female role division in the family and in social life akin to the practices of pre-Nazi Germany. However, during the war and the immediate post-war era evolved the concept and practice of *Kameradschaft* (companionship) as characterizing the relation between young men and women, which continued to determine gender relations on the micro level of family life during the 1950s, 1960s and later, especially in the working classes. This fact helps to understand the conundrum between the results of surveys that state the existence of egalitarian structures in family authority already since the 1950s, while the conservative conceptions of gender order of the bourgeois family model were imposed on West German women during the 1950s, and early 1960s as the normative rule on the meso and macro levels and had a lasting normative effect on the social mentality of the women who married during this period.

26. I like to point out here that ARUGA's argument bears a certain resemblance to the critical discussion about the fallacy of *etic* interpretations and the necessity of understanding *emic* concepts as a prerequisite for correctly interpreting cultures in ethnology and cultural anthropology.
27. In Germany and Japan, the couple had to select between one of the spouses' family names as their family name upon marriage, and when they could not decide, the husband's family name was automatically chosen by the registrar; in practice in the vast majority of marriages in both countries women were forced to change their family name. In Germany the battle ended in March 1991 with a decision of the Federal Constitutional Court that allows the couple not to select a common family name of husband and wife with marriage, in Japan the legal problems are not yet solved.
28. Until the legal reforms of the Meiji Era the vast majority of Japanese men and all of the Japanese women did not have family names. Family names were basically limited to male members of the nobility (*kuge* 公家 and *bushi* 武士) and their male descendants, even if they gave up their nobility status.
29. Of course, not every sociologist after World War II subscribed to the new paradigm of quantitative cross-national comparative sociology. For instance, Stanislaw ANDRESKI who was heavily influenced by Max WEBER's comparative analysis in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* understood comparative sociology mainly as a kind of comparative historical analysis based on intimate understanding of the cultures involved using secondary, and to a lesser degree, primary sources. ANDRESKI (1984: 11-14 and 83-143) has categorized much of Max WEBER's sociological writings, especially his 1922 monumental *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* as systematic spatial and historical cross-cultural comparative sociology, which is divided into comparative morphology and a systematic analysis that focusses on processes, causes, and consequences, hence on transformations and their causes, while aiming at understanding and explaining especially the reasons why modern (industrial) capitalism developed in the West; however, he also points out that WEBER's generalizations remain on the level of inductive propositions of empirical generalizations about regularities of accompaniment or sequence and don't attempt to propose a Grand Theory, which offers a universal key for explaining human society and its development in general. The latter point is also a caveat for the interpretation of WEBER's (1930) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as such a Grand Theory (concerning the limits and uses of Max WEBER's analysis see ANDRESKI 1984: 123-139; see also ANDRESKI 1964). More recently, the social historian Michael MITTERAUER in his *Why Europe?* from 2010 applied a similar approach of historical comparative sociology to the same problem as Weber. I also like to point to Leo LÖWENTAL's (1972) historical and cross-cultural comparative approach to sociology of literature.
30. I have customarily posed the question of "what is the scientists' goal of research?" to my upper-level undergraduate and post-graduate students, and they mostly answer "to expand human knowledge". But then I state that this is a very admirable, but also very lofty ideal. Scientists' research is executed in the social environment and institutions of research and higher education, and they are first of all social beings who must work for their living. So, the primary goal of their research is to earn money, either by acquiring patents, or by being able to publish and accumulate credentials that allow them an academic career leading into a stable and well-paid position. However, I must note here, like the majority of human beings the majority of scientists too is rather lazy what concerns working more than they must to achieve a life appropriate for their status and aspirations, and therefore they will rabidly protect an easier way to accumulate credentials and earn money.

31. This text was originally written in Japanese in August-September 2020 as my contribution to an online omnibus lecture on *Comparative Area Studies* for third-year undergraduate students. In the course of its translation in October-November 2021 I decided on an extensive rewriting of the English text.
32. Of all the works of French sociology since the 1840s only the small book of Émile Durkheim's *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* was translated into German in the early 1970s; studying French sociology meant studying it in French, which was quite excruciating work in the beginning.
33. Concerning the European Marxist debate on the Asiatic Mode of Production see SOFRI 1969, 1972, concerning the East-Asian debate see Chapter 1 of SHIOZAWA 1970. The debate on the Asiatic Mode of Production did not only have political and academic angles, after WITTFOGEL's (1957) *Oriental Despotism* with its linking of 'hydraulic societies' with despotic rule, and its revealing of MARX characterizing Oriental societies as 'despotic', it also had, especially in Asia, strong emotional connotations of being singled out as being outside of the general course of human development and despised, see also SONG 1987.
34. Humanities in West German Universities of the 1970s did not grant the degree of *Bachelor of Arts*, and until the introduction of the degree of *Master of Arts* in the 1960s one had to finish one's studies with a PhD, and in the 1970s it was still possible to go directly for a PhD without a prior master degree, what most people attempted to do.
35. I regarded that kind of explanation of Japan's modernization as rather stupid, because the evolvement of a capitalist modernization could not be successful by simply imitating Western models of society and economy, but had to be based on indigenous social, economic, and mental factors that had fostered this development. The only books that tried to analyze such factors at the time were E. Herbert Norman's 1940 *Japan's Emergence as a Modern State*, Thomas C. SMITH's 1965 *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, and to a lesser degree Robert N. BELLAH's 1957 *Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan*, however, the latter fixated on Max WEBER's (1930) thesis as of Protestantism's role in the emergence of industrial capitalism and was bent on finding analogies to the protestant ethic.
36. The systematic observation of non-European peoples by Europeans actually started almost 200 years earlier with the reports from Jesuit priests to the Vatican, but the Church kept these reports largely secret in the archives of the Vatican and they were forgotten until Jesuit historians rediscovered them in the 20th Century.
37. Engelbert KAEMPFER (1651-1715) was a German naturalist and physician who travelled through Russia, Persia, India, South-East Asia, and Japan between 1683 and 1693. He wrote a lot of manuscripts on the nature and on the peoples of the places he visited, their history and life. Only very few of his manuscripts were published during his life, but he sold his unpublished manuscripts and collected items to the British collector and royal physician Sir Hans SLOAN for his cabinet of curiosities, which led to the posthumous publication of KAEMPFER's voluminous *History of Japan* in 1727. Later KAEMPFER's manuscripts and collected objects became an important part of the beginning of the British Museum, which was founded in 1753 after SLOANE bequeathed upon his death his collection of more than 71,000 objects, books, manuscripts and other items to the nation under the condition to provide housing and competent care for the collection.
38. On KAEMPFER and SIEBOLD see OAG 1966.
39. This question has been the topic of intensive and often controversial discussions in cultural anthropology and ethnology since the second half of the 1960s, for a more recent example of this discussion concerning anthropology and colonialism in Asia and Oceania see BREMEN and SHIMIZU 1999. The relation between the oriental philological studies and colonialism were largely uninfluenced of these debates until SAID's (1979) book on *Orientalism*.
40. Some of them became actually staunch supporters and advocates for the peoples with whom they got involved in their research. If we want to find proactive agents of colonial expansion, we have to look at the merchants and Christian missionaries who closely allied themselves with the military and naval forces of their own countries for promoting their own goals. However, many of the missionaries gained influential diplomatic and academic positions after their return to their home countries.
41. For a thorough analysis of the doctrinal development of anthropological theories and *Evolutionism* and *Spencerism* see chapters 6-8 of HARRIS 2001.
42. During the second half of the 1930s and the 1940s the Harvard Yenching Institute became the kernel

- for the development of East-Asian and South-East-Asian studies in the United States. Concerning the economic and strategic interests of the United States in East and South-East Asia from the late 18th Century to the Pacific War see parts I and II of GREEN 2017.
43. For instance Sinologists learned Manchurian and Japanese for becoming able to use the semantic commentaries and grammatical diacritic annotations in Manchurian and Japanese copies of classical Chinese texts, and concerning more recent times, the knowledge of Japanese allowed to use the Chinese-Japanese dictionaries from the 1920s and 1930s, a period in which great changes in Chinese vocabulary occurred, but for which neither Chinese or Western dictionaries exist that cover this vocabulary; on the other hand Japanologists learned classical Chinese in order to understand the vast store of Japanese *kanbun* texts that accumulated until the end of the Meiji-Period.
 44. I remember well Harumi BEFU's dictum "cultural anthropology is not comparative" during the discussion in 1998 above that contrasts completely with 19th Century cultural anthropology and its heavy use of comparative methods, see for instant MORGAN 1877.
 45. And this new understanding also destroyed any adherence to unilineal models of social and cultural evolution, which was later reinforced by reading TOULMIN's (1977) *Human Understanding* and his understanding of the evolution of concepts. The problem with social evolutionism is that it conceives of human history as progressing unilineally through universal developmental stages to a final goal. In his critique of KUHN's concept of scientific progress through revolutions, TOULMIN goes back to biological evolutionism and contents the teleological notion that evolution has a purpose in attaining a final goal, and he also contents the notion that evolution inherently implies progress. Rather variations of forms occur as a response to environmental conditions and as adaptations to changing conditions, and the results of such evolution are not always successful. However, in hindsight we can inquire the causes and effects of this evolution. In a certain sense, in the *Forms that Precede Capitalist Production* MARX (1970) displays a similar understanding of human history, and it is also evident in Max WEBER's understanding of historical developments as non-predetermined evolution (See ANDRESKI 1984: 53-58).
 46. Such differences often disappear in translation, because the translators more or less unconsciously adapt their translations to the customs in their own country, and they also tend to exclude parts of the original, when they differ too much in their problem consciousness from the topics that are deemed as legitimate within the scientific community of the target country, the Japanese translation of Ulrich BECK's (1986, 1998) risk society is a good example for the problem what is selected for translation, and what not The trans-cultural communication between the national sciences is much less objective than many social scientists believe..

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Some Reflections on Comparative Sociology and Comparative Area Studies

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Abstract

These research notes summarize the current state of my methodological reflections on comparative sociology and comparative area studies. They advocate the inclusion of a social-historical and cultural-studies' perspective along with a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods in the comparative study of societies and cultures, while drawing heavily upon my own experience during more than fifty years of research and teaching in these fields.