

## Prefatory Remarks

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Nichibunken is pleased to welcome you to this symposium, "The Korean Diaspora and Strategies for Global Networks," and we are honored and delighted to be cooperating with Dr. Koh and her East Rock Institute on the organization of this event.

From the perspective of this Center, this conference has a double purpose. On the one hand it is to consider in comparative analytical terms the experience and some of the meanings of the migration of communities of people of Korean origin, and to deliberate ideas about how to create of a new Internet-based network of scholars that will facilitate expansion and deepening of knowledge of the important phenomenon of diaspora. Dr. Koh will elaborate on this set of purposes in a few moments. At the same time as this symposium strives to achieve this set of goals, so far as Nichibunken is concerned, this meeting has a second objective, also a network-building purpose. We continually make efforts, at this Center, to enlarge and strengthen the international and interdisciplinary connections among scholars whose work either focuses on Japan or takes Japan as a significant comparative case. In the last five years, one of the ways we at Nichibunken have channeled our efforts at cross-cultural and cross-border scholarly network-building is by organizing conferences at which non-Japanese scholars who reside and work in Japan constitute the core group of participants.

For the record, and to give you a sense of the institutional context into which this event fits, the first such conference met in March 2000. On that occasion, we at Nichibunken (with our Office of Research Exchange taking the initiative and the organizational responsibility) brought together people, mostly Westerners, who live and work in this country and specialize in various fields of Japanese studies, but whose principal scholarly language is English.<sup>1</sup> In February 2001 we gave primacy

to scholars with Korean nationality who reside and work in Japan.<sup>2</sup> In January 2002 we invited Chinese researchers resident in Japan and also some guests from China.<sup>3</sup> In September 2002 we once again brought together a group made up mostly of Korean-background scholars.<sup>4</sup> A year ago, from September 25 through 27, 2003, we at Nichibunken invited twenty-four non-Japanese scholars who often or usually present the results of their research in English. Participants last year came from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds, and to find common ground, we asked them to reflect on the act of “Observing Japan from Within,” and to discuss what is distinctive, if anything, about the perspective of a scholar who was raised and mostly trained outside Japan, once that person is living and working in an academic position in this country.<sup>5</sup>

This symposium on the Korean Diaspora is the sixth in a series, then, by Nichibunken’s count. Dr. Koh will place it in a different series and give it a different number—she labels it the Third Conference on the Korean Diaspora and Strategies for Global Networking—but what matters is that both this Center and the East Rock Institute are in full agreement that there is work of great consequence to be done here, and we can profit from combining our efforts and resources. Over the next four days, in formal sessions and in informal conversations, we can be confident that our heads will be filled with fresh information and exciting thoughts about novel possibilities for research and for productive scholarly collaboration. In the wider society around us in Japan—indeed throughout Asia—a Korea boom is in full swing, with Korean dramas, Korean pop music, and Korean cuisine at unprecedented highs of popularity. Exactly how this might be connected to the Korean diaspora, I think it difficult to say. Whether the interest in Korea sparked by this boom will endure, we cannot predict. We might speculate that the interest will prove to be rather shallow, as with many fads. In this symposium on the diaspora, however, we can concentrate on a history and an ongoing process that are clearly established as long-lasting and significant, not only for Koreans, and overseas Koreans, but also for the societies and individuals outside Korea with whom they interact, especially for Japan and the Japanese.

## Notes

1. The theme of the first conference was “Japanese ‘Studies after the

- bursting of the Economic Bubble”; this was a one-day meeting and there was no related publication.
2. Papers from the second symposium for foreign scholars resident in Japan were published under the title *Sekai no Nihon Kenkyu 2001: Koria ni okeru Nihon kenkyu no genzai* 世界の日本研究 2001 コリアにおける日本研究の現在 (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2002) .
  3. The theme of the third symposium was “Nitchū kankei no nijusseiki o furikaeru” 日中関係の二十世紀をふりかえる, and papers from the meeting were later published in the journal *Ajia yūgaku* アジア遊学, no. 41 (June 2002) and no. 44 (September 2002) .
  4. The fourth conference in this series, “Nihon tōchi-ka no Chōsen: Kenkyū no genjō to kadai” 日本統治下の朝鮮：研究の現状と課題, resulted in another volume of essays, *Sekai no Nihon kenkyū 2002: Nihon tōchi-ka no Chōsen: kenkyū no genjō to kadai* 世界の日本研究 2002：日本統治下の朝鮮：研究の現状と課題 (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2003) .
  5. The papers from this symposium, collected and edited by James C. Baxter, were published by the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in 2004 under the title *Observing Japan from Within: Perspectives of Foreign Scholars Resident in Japan* (Japanese Studies around the World 2004).