

## あとがき / Afterword

How, in the end, can we hope to understand contemporary Japan? “Understanding Contemporary Japan” was after all the grand theme of our symposium held at the University of Indonesia in early October last year. Did we get anywhere achieving our goal? Reflecting on the conference itself and the conference papers in this collection, it seems to me that we did make some important strides in the right direction. After all, there was abundant evidence at the symposium of the deep reflection and careful research that is essential to furthering understanding. The critical next stage is always writing up our findings and airing them in the form of public presentations, submitting them to the scrutiny of our peers. Of this scrutiny, there was much evidence at our symposium. There was wide-ranging, stimulating and always constructive discussion both in the conference hall and afterwards as well. So far; so good.

Of course, we cannot hope to understand Japan if we confine ourselves to a single discipline, and close our eyes to the work being done in fields not obviously proximate to our own. The symposium was, in this regard, a great success for it was truly multi-disciplinary in nature. There were fascinating papers on a whole range of topics from popular culture to natural history and from sociology to economics. What was particularly impressive to those of us from Nichibunken was the contribution—often from the floor; sometimes in the form of presentations—from young Indonesian scholars and students. They are the future of Japanese studies in Indonesia, and our ability to nurture them, and their linguistic and academic talents, will determine the capacity of the next generation to understand Japan. Their active participation in discussions was a major contribution to the success of the event.

The papers in this collection are a true record of the 17th Overseas Symposium, “Understanding Contemporary Japan” (「日本の文化と社会の潮流」), co-hosted by Nichibunken and the University of Indonesia, 5–7 October 2010. We, the editors, are sure that these papers will convey to the reader a real sense of the intellectual excitement that all the contributors—from Indonesia, Japan and many other countries besides—experienced for the duration of the conference.

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